



St. Mark's Messenger

AUGUST 2016

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

601 Washington Avenue ~ Hagerstown, MD

301-733-7550 ~ Website: lutheranchurchhagerstown.com

The Reverend G. Stanley Steele, Senior Pastor

Pastoral Musings...

This past Sunday I preached on prayer and Jesus' telling us to pray 'shamelessly' in Luke 11:8 which some translate as persistent or boldly but really means shameless. Jesus wants us to pray hopefully and expectantly! This does not mean we will receive the answer we wish, but it does mean we are to pray with faith and to pray shameless. To me this means we are to be bold in our prayers to God who wants us, his children, to have fruitful and full lives. I don't know about you but I don't pray this way. My prayers tend to be pleas or requests with no real sense of boldness or expectancy. As I listen to folks I sense many pray in this same fashion. Yet Jesus is saying we are to pray with full faith that God hears us and will respond to our prayers. Wow! Just think how that changes everything. Now we pray confident in God's presence and love and come with the strong hope that God will respond to our prayers.

This is also true for us as a congregation. It is time for us to pray, 'shamelessly, confidently, faithfully' as people of faith. It is time to realize that God has not abandoned us but is powerfully present and calling us forward in boldness. This congregation has faced challenges in the past and with faith in God and bold faith and prayers faced those challenges. We now face a new time and new challenges and it is time to have that same boldness of faith and prayer. Remember nothing is impossible with God. We can grow in faith and confidence and service. St. Mark's is at the crossroad to move to a new and exciting future as a church of witness and service and strength or to shrink into insecurity and scarcity. We have so much to be thankful for as a congregation – strong leaders, faithful disciples, caring friends, good facilities, strong endowment and increasing witnessing to our community. Here are some examples:

- A new children's ministry on Tuesday evenings with community and church children coming together to find faith and joy
- Group of 20 plus members who gather once a month for fellowship and conversation
- New families visiting and joining our community of faith
- A new initiative with Elizabeth, Madison and Washington Street working with the City of Hagerstown and Police to begin a new neighborhood group to address the crime, grim and hopelessness in the community around us
- Learning Parties that bring parents and children together to prepare for school with help with reading, social skills, emotional support and the like
- Block Party to help over 600 children prepare for a new school year
- A Food Bank Ministry that feeds close to 12,000 children and adults with Micah's Backpacks our weekly distribution of food to families

The list can go on and on to include visits and cards to the home bound and ill, the support to those struggling in life, the opportunity for our youth to grow in faith. So let's be bold and shameless in our prayers and in our faith and in our deeds as we move forward to strengthen this congregation for the future.

With Boldness and Hope,

Pastor Stan



Trophy for Sale

Over the weekend I was on the way to the grocery store and totally forgot about the Mile Long Yard Sale that is held in the north end of Hagerstown during the Fourth of July. I drove by a house that had items outside for the sale. Even though I did not stop for the sale, I could not help but notice the table closest to the street -- what caught my eye was a table filled with old trophies that were now for sale on someone's driveway.

I had to wonder why anyone would be interested in purchasing a used trophy. What could they possibly do with it? The trophies for sale probably had the name of the recipient engraved on it, along with a brief description of their admirable actions. Who would want to put someone else's trophy on their mantle?

Later, I began to wonder why the seller wanted to get rid of their old trophies in the first place. I am sure that at one time those trophies held a lot of value, or at least some emotional attachment. Prior to Andrew leaving for college last year, I spent time in his bedroom clearing out old clothing, school supplies, etc. I also decided to box up his trophies, many from when he was very young such as his Little League trophies and various school awards. I performed the same tasks several years earlier in Mandy's room. Their trophies probably hold more sentimental value to me than they do for either of them. Trophies usually signify some accomplishment -- they serve to remind us of some success in our personal or business life. Maybe a baseball trophy loses its luster when one stops playing. That trophy from a winning high school softball season might not seem as important thirty years later when your own children are in college. What we value today might wind up in the trash or on a table at a rummage sale tomorrow.

The truth of the matter is that there is nothing in this life we can carry with us into the next. The trinkets and knick-knacks we treasure here on earth will be of no value in eternity. This being so, it makes me wonder why we spend so much time acquiring earthly possessions, but so little time preparing for the life which is to come.

Suppose you gained all that this world has to offer -- what would you really have? A handful of plastic and metal? While I'm not saying it is time to throw out all your possessions, especially the ones that hold memories, I do think we need to turn our thoughts to what we should value -- God's grace and love. We need to determine how we can achieve God's "trophies" -- certainly the ones worth displaying to the world!

¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.

²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:19-21)

Blessings,
Julie Fiery
Council President

The August 3rd Council Meeting will be postponed until August 17th at 6:30.

RALLY DAY - AUGUST 21ST AT 9:30AM

Please join us for a great time as we start up an exciting year of learning and faith development! We will start with Breakfast and then break out into our classes. The Adult Classes will meet together to be introduced to 'The Story', our year long reading and discussion of the Bible. It will be a fun filled day so come to enjoy, explore and learn. Bring a friend or family member as well. There will be a blessing of Backpacks and students and teachers on August 21st also. See you on August 21st.

The Story begins this Fall

This Fall we will together read and study the Word of God using the resource 'The Story' which is the Bible in a narrative format. We will begin with creation and go till Revelation. We will have time on Sunday morning to discuss, in our worship and during the week. Let us enrich ourselves in the Word together. There will be copies of The Story for your purchase.

Worship Service-There will be a single worship service on Sunday, September 11 at 9:00 a.m. followed by congregational small group meetings to allow the council to distribute and discuss the report received from Partners for Sacred Places. It is important for all congregational members to attend so that everyone is informed and given the opportunity to clarify any concerns or questions regarding the report.

You're Invited To Join "F.R.O.G. Kids"- Kids Who Fully Rely On God!

Where: St. Mark's Lutheran Church-601 Washington Avenue

When: Every Tuesday, 6:00 – 8:00 pm

Popcorn and drinks will be served! Activities may involve, watching movies, enjoying crafts, playing games and sharing God's word with each other! Open to everyone of all ages. Come and have fun with us!



Donation Boxes- The Donation Boxes located around the church will be designated for the refinishing of the three sets of red entry doors to the sanctuary during the months of July and August. With the amount of repairs and renovations needed around the church, we are asking that the congregation prayerfully considering helping to offset some of the costs so that we can continue to utilize the Endowment and Building Fund accounts for some of our larger upcoming projects like the parking lot and building renovations.



September (only) Donation boxes will be designated for Micah's Backpacks.

Director of Music

The summer is already half over, and we have been blessed to have had several vocal and instrumental soloists participate in our Sunday services; and there are still more to come. But, before you know it, it will be time for choirs to start back up again. Most likely, all choirs will start the week of Labor Day. As we get closer to that time, watch the Sunday bulletins for specifics and more information. Enjoy the rest of your summer, try to stay cool, and think about joining a choir - or at least trying it out - in September.

+++++ **SAVE THE DATE** +++++

The Washington County Lutheran Churches are planning an Advent service/program on Sunday, Nov.27 at 4:00pm. It will be held at Haven Lutheran Church, and will include Advent hymns and scripture readings, and a couple selections presented by a combined choir. So mark this date on your calendar and plan to attend this Advent event on Nov. 27.

Your co-worker in Christ,

Kathy Barr



Lunch Bunch-The Lunch Bunch will be having their next monthly gathering at the Fireside Restaurant & Lounge, located at 1716 Underpass Way, Tuesday, August 16th, at **12:00 pm**. Come and join us and enjoy great food and fellowship!

St. Mark's Prayer Network

St. Mark's Prayer Network Phone Tree is available to anyone at anytime who needs prayers. We welcome your desire to share your prayer needs with us. In emergency crisis, when requesting prayers, please consult with the person or family before asking for the requests. Co-Chairs: You can call Pastor Stan 856-685-4268, Sue Kessler 301-223-4160 or Judy Munday 301-739-4669 for prayer requests. What a friend we have in Jesus, he listens to our every prayer. Let us Pray together, St. Mark's Prayer Network, truly cares.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

The whole people of God in Christ Jesus, for the church, those in need, and all of God's creation especially today for Wendy Fraker, Colby Waugh, Teresa Schaefer, Doris Brooks, Mary Carroll, Gina Grove, Alice White, Sarah Freitas, Carla Ness, Jeff Martin, Jerry Moser, Kennedy Shank, Durbin College, Nick Colvin, Jerry Brant, friends and family of Bill Howell and friends and family of Charles "Slugger" Elgin.



Shut-In Visitation Update -Recently several church leaders met with Pastor to review our shut-in and befriender list in order to clarify our visitation strategy. Currently our shut-in list is comprised of 18 members, this does not include members who temporarily need visits due to immediate medical or personal crisis. While we realize that there needs to be some flexibility in the visitation

schedule due to unexpected occurrences, we determined that our goal is to establish bi-monthly visits for each shut-in. This will allow for approximately half of our shut-in members to be visited one month, the balance will be visited the next month. Our objective is to offer at least 5-6 visits per year from the pastor.

In addition to the pastor, our befrienders and other lay members continue to reach out to our shut-ins, hospitalized individuals, and long-term care facility residents. Such a program within the church helps to insure that all members and friends of our congregation who should receive phone calls, visits and postcards will get them from people who care enough to do it.

We truly appreciate the time and effort that the befrienders and other lay members give to this much-needed ministry. If you and or someone you know wishes to be placed on the shut-in or befriender list, please contact the church office. If you have any questions or concerns you may contact Linda Perry, Judy Munday, Julie Fiery or Pastor Steele.

Esther Class – I am very excited to be taking over the Esther Class this fall from Linda Perry, who did a very terrific job and her shoes will be very hard to fill. We will be studying the women of the Bible, from the most notable to the least notable. All are important in the eyes of our Lord. We will begin with Eve and continue on. We would love to have new members join our class. If you would like to check us out, please do. We would love to have you. Classes will begin on August 21th at 9:30. Thank you, Linda Richards

Mark Your Calendar for the Church Picnic!

St. Mark's will be having their yearly church picnic, at Doub's Woods, Sunday, September 25th. More details to come ☺



Blood Pressure

Mary Lou Moser, RN, will be checking blood pressures, every first Sunday of each month, during Sunday School.

Highlights from Council Meeting

July 6, 2016



- Majority of Members were in attendance.
- Request from youth member to assist with funding for a summer academy hosted by the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. Funding approved from designated Youth Activities account.
- Report provided by the Executive Committee regarding a joint meeting with Girls, Inc. The group met the previous week to discuss parking lot usage by Girls Inc. as well as shared maintenance costs for the upcoming parking lot upgrades. Girls Inc. will provide half of the funds needed for the work on the parking lot, made in monthly payment installments (to be completed in ten months or sooner). Girls Inc. agreed to work closely with their renters to help alleviate the parking problems that arise throughout the school season, especially during the evening hours. An event calendar will be shared between the church and Girls Inc. so that they can work to avoid our evening Lenten and Holy Week services, as well as funerals or weddings. St. Mark's extended an offer to Girls Inc. to help support their service to young girls in the community.
- The Renovation Task Force is working to obtain new prices reflecting a "scaled down" version of the previously presented renovation plan. More information will be available soon.
- The council will be holding an open forum discussion on Sunday, September 11 at 9:45 a.m. We will worship with one service at 9:00, then break into smaller groups for discussion pertaining to the report received from Partners for Sacred Places. Copies of the entire report will be available prior to the meeting.
- The council received the resignation of Tom Banzhoff as the church custodian, effective July 31, 2016. The council appreciates the work Tom has done during his tenure. The Personnel Committee will work to hire someone before the end of July though Tom has agreed to stay until we find a replacement, he also agreed to help with training.
- Pastor provided the council with a summarized visitation list for the past month. Pastor also indicated the various church programs in which he has participated as well as several community meetings he has attended, especially in regards to organizing a Neighborhoods First Group for the area located immediately around the church. Pastor has also attended several meetings pertaining to the future use of Winter Street School.
- Financial reports indicate that our offerings have decreased YTD through June in comparison to last year YTD through June 2015. Unfortunately we have been forced to request additional funding from the Endowment Committee to, once again, offset current operating expenses. Council is concerned, knowing that each request decreases the Endowment's ability to assist with any needed upgrades and renovations to the building.
- The council approved the quote from Craig Paving and Chuck Harrell Home Construction in the amount of \$20,470 to do parking lot repairs as well as sidewalk and entry/exit ramp repairs to the parking lot area. All ramps will be upgraded to meet ADA requirements. Girls Inc. will provide half of the necessary funds. A congregational meeting is scheduled for July 24, 2016 at 10:30 to receive approval to move forward with this work. Council will request funds from the Endowment Committee, all payments by Girls Inc. will be returned to Endowment.
- Council approved some maintenance work for several A/C condensing units. Council received a quote from CSE, the Property Committee recommended moving forward with a portion of the work at this time. Cost for the work is \$1,319 and will be covered by the Building Fund account.

- Council discussed upgrades to the internet service at the church as well as the ability to provide internet throughout the building, especially in several of the educational areas. More information will be forthcoming.
- The Block Party is July 30 and they are in need of donations and volunteers. Please see the newsletter and Sunday bulletins.
- **NEXT MEETING – August 17 at 6:30 p.m. Meetings are open to all congregational members.**

The Importance of Being

The first 5 months of ministry in South Africa have come to an end, as well as the Missions Discipleship Training I was taking part in. I feel as though I have been much more equipped and prepared for a life of missions after completing this training. Originally, I had decided to serve at AIDS Hope in South Africa, joining a team who works with children who have been affected in some way by HIV/AIDS. However, a door opened for me to return to the country of Lesotho where I had previously been on an outreach in April. After spending time in prayer and considering my options, I decided to commit to serve in Lesotho instead of joining the AIDS Hope team. Lesotho is a very underdeveloped country, landlocked by South Africa. The life expectancy of its citizens is only 45 years and half of the population lives below the poverty line. Unemployment can reach as high as 45% with little job availability. Of all people living in this country, 89% claim to be Christian but most of these proclaiming Christians mix their faith with animism or ancestral worship, so really only 12% are born-again evangelicals. The ministry opportunities are numerous and I will be initiating kid's clubs/programs and Bible studies, working on evangelizing the village I live in as well as the surrounding villages, and helping to meet the needs of the community in practical ways. As I take on this new endeavor, I hope to continue to have your support as we work together as the body of Christ to bring the Good News to all people.

What I have been learning over the past few months is something I believe most of us struggle with. I think we really want to do “great things” for God. At least I know I do. I want to go to this place and feed these people. I want to start this program and plant that church. I want to go to the ends of the earth to people who have never heard the name of Jesus and tell them about His salvation and love. I want to go, go, go and do, do, do. And there is nothing wrong with that...unless I am neglecting to “be.” Neglecting to *be* the person God wants me to be. Forgetting that God cares more about me, my character, my transforming more into the likeness of His Son, than He does about me taking on these great projects and doing these great things for His Name. When we first learn to be, the going and doing will follow naturally anyway.

I recently read a passage from a book called Forgotten God, written by Francis Chan, which challenged me greatly. I wanted to summarize it but I believe it is best if read straight from the original text:

You are most likely familiar with the “fruit passage” in Galatians 5, which says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” You may even have the list memorized. But look over those traits right now and ask yourself if you possess each to a supernatural degree. Do you exhibit more kindness and faithfulness than the Mormons you know? Do you have more self-control than your Muslim friends? More peace than Buddhists? More joy than atheists? If God truly lives in you, shouldn't you expect to be different from everyone else?...Do you know what it's like to be filled with joy? Do you experience genuine peace regardless of your life circumstances? Do you consistently respond with kindness no matter what you receive from others? Can you imagine what it would be like never to get stressed-out or to worry because you are so filled with the peace and love of God? Don't you want to be characterized by these attitudes? Don't we all want peace, and self-control, and all the rest? I don't know about you, but I cannot simply muster up more love. I can't manufacture patience just by gritting my teeth and determining to be more patient. We are not strong or good enough, and it doesn't work that way. None of us can “do goodness” on our own, much less all the other elements that make up the fruit

of the Spirit. But despite our inability to change ourselves in this way, to simply become more peaceful or joyful, we expend a great deal of effort trying. **We focus on what God wants us to do and we forget the kind of people He wants us to be.** Instead of mustering up more willpower, let's focus our energies and time on asking for help from the One who has the power to change us. Let's take the time to ask God to put the fruit of His Spirit into our lives. And let's spend time with the One we want to be more like.

Naturally, as we spend more time with Jesus, we will become more like Him. And as we become more like Him, we are growing into the person God desires us to be. As the fruit of the Spirit grows in us in increasing measure, this is when the world begins to take notice. The world starts to see that we are different, that we possess something it doesn't have. And the world starts to want what we have. People become curious. They are intrigued. Conversations start. Doors are opened. We have opportunities to speak of our experiences, share our faith, and testify to God's love and faithfulness. God will use us to speak into their lives truth and love and hope. The Spirit will begin a work in their hearts. I believe this is one of the secrets to winning the world to Christ. It begins with us, the children of the King. So let us "be" – be with Christ, spend time at His feet, devote ourselves to prayer and communion with Him, study and soak up the Word, be one with our Lord. As we do this, He will be faithful in filling us with the fruit of His Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control – in supernatural measures that captures the attention of others, especially unbelievers. While we focus on being, we will naturally desire to go out and do the work God has prepared for us to do, now with His characteristics and light shining through us. We will be busy "being and doing," and the world will be busy watching, wondering, wanting, waiting...waiting for us to step out and speak of Christ's love, and I pray that we always will.

**In Christ,
Mikahla Stouffer**

Hello Everyone,

It's time again for the annual Community Book Drive! We would once again love to have your participation. Last year over 17,000 books were collected for use in children's literacy programs and little free libraries. YOU helped make that happen. We hope we can count on your help again this year. Some have already signed up to help-THANK YOU. If not, please let me or Terri Gwizdala know if you plan to participate. Please also let me know if your contact person, collection location, or hours have changed.

The book drive is a partnership of HARC, Rotary, United Way and Early Childhood Advisory Council. As you know, each year it is part of the United Way's Day of Caring projects. **This year the Day of Caring is early-Sept. 29-so the book drive will be slightly abbreviated. We ask you to collect books this year from Sept. 1st-25th,** allowing time for the books to be picked up during the week leading up to the Day of Caring. We are once again collecting books for children ages 0-11.

Thanks again for your help with this project in the past! We look forward to working with you again this year to promote early childhood literacy in Washington County. Blessings, Kathy, Executive Director, Hagerstown Area Religious Council. Kathy.harc@gmail.com, www.harccoalition.org, 301-842-4272.

Thank You

I would like to thank everyone that sold and/or purchased sandwiches during the month of June. We sold 184 sandwiches in total and made a profit of \$383.00 for the building fund. Every little bit helps and we plan to have a few more fundraisers thru out the remainder of the year to help build up the building fun. Suggestions have been made to have a soup and sandwich sale in the fall, there will be a spaghetti feed in November and I am working on plans for a Christmas bazaar and cookie walk. I hope you all will help with any or all of the projects to come. Thank you again for helping to make the sandwich sale a success. Susan Hawbaker.

THANK
YOU!

Newsletter

Just a friendly reminder that any updates or information to be put in the monthly Newsletter is due the month prior, on the **21st** of each month. Please send information via email or leave on my desk. Thank You!
Teresa Delosier



If you would like to become a sponsor for the newsletter, the cost is \$50. Please contact the church office 301-733-7550.



Happy August Birthday to:

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|----|------------------|----|------------------|
| 1 | Conrad Beard | 13 | Tyler Harshman |
| 2 | Linda Kauffman | 16 | Stan Stouffer |
| | Charlie Munday | 17 | Kathy Barr |
| 5 | Joseph Smith | 18 | Nelson Hartman |
| 6 | John Gundling | 20 | Margaret Rishell |
| 8 | Dustin Vogel | 22 | David Ridenour |
| 9 | Robin Twigg | 24 | Dave Kessler |
| 11 | Angela Mogensen | | Frank Nutter |
| | Jason Morris | 27 | Paulina Mills |
| | Tara Sprecher | 28 | Devin Kelley |
| 12 | Jean Stonestreet | 29 | Robert Myers |
| | Alexandra Elsen | | |