



St. Mark's Messenger

February 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...

I struggle each month to prepare thoughts to share with you. I look for inspiration that will be meaningful and helpful. Well, this month the well is dry so to speak. Not that there is not inspiring moments in life but I seem to be out of tune so to speak to touch them. It is frustrating to find myself in this place. Part of the reason is that it seems each day is so full. To be inspired takes observation, reflection, and availability to the moment. So when you find yourself as I find myself just trying to keep up, you lose sight of the moments that will inspire and sustain you. With this being said I need to ask of you a favor, will you join with me in a Lenten Journey of inspiration and reflection? Would it be possible for us to travel together in fellowship, study and worship to be inspired again by the word of God, by prayer and by the presence of the Holy Spirit within and among us? I believe we can. All we need is the time and willingness to set this journey as a priority.

The journey begins on Ash Wednesday with services at 12 Noon and 7 pm. Yes, this is a solemn service, but we do at times need to look deep within ourselves and ponder the Holy. We will continue each Wednesday of Lent for supper, study and worship. We will begin at 5:30 pm with supper, followed at 6:30 pm with study and conclude at 7:30 pm with Worship. Feel free to come for the whole evening or for any part that fits your schedule. Our study will be based on the series, *H2O*, and includes the following topics:

Episode 1 – Thirsty All people are thirsty for truth and meaning. Illustrating this search for fulfillment, the first episode features a desperate search for a wedding ring lost in the ocean's surf. As they desperately search for the ring, the video explores our own concerns about finding satisfaction in life and our hopes for a happy ending. **Episode 2 – Polluted** The goal of this episode is to help viewers set aside their negative ideas about the church - at least temporarily - so they can clearly consider Jesus. In this video, a young man stands disillusioned on the bank of a foul, poisonous river. Rather than turning his back on it, he heads to the river's pure source for inspiration. **Episode 3 – Source** God is the source of life. In this episode our preconceptions of God are examined, including those stemming from flawed relationships with our earthly fathers. In this half hour, we see a true picture of God's love for His children. **Episode 4 – Pure** We see life transformed in the story of Christ's interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well, and her story of longing is reflected in an image of our modern society. Here the viewers meet Jesus who loves them for who they really are and who can satisfy their deepest longings. **Episode 5 – Mirage** Only the Living Water of Christ can satisfy our thirst but Satan may fool us into chasing mirages with promises of satisfaction that never materialize. This program shows how if we continue to chase mirages, we miss out on the fulfilled life Jesus offers and will ultimately die of thirst. **Episode 6 – Drowning** This powerful episode addresses the Biblical concept of sin, its unavoidable consequences, and Christ's ultimate solution. From the concept of original sin to Christ's atonement on the cross, it paints a compelling picture of our separation from God and how Christ came to bridge the gap. **Episode 7 – Drink** The moving story of a death row inmate serves as a metaphor for a sinner's journey from death to a forgiven new life in Christ. As the inmate's movement of execution arrives, we are compelled to discover the mysteries and joys of redemption from a heavenly perspective. **Episode 8 – Clean** Christians often carry so much of

their old baggage and perceptions into their new life in Christ that they fail to embrace their true identity as a new creation. This episode explores the believer's identity from a Biblical perspective, teaching viewers how to see themselves through the Father's eyes. **Episode 9 – Vapor** The Christian life is not a typical human experience. It is literally a supernatural existence. This episode shares how the presence of the Holy Spirit guides and empowers believers, making every Christian's life an ever-deepening adventure. **Episode 10 – River** In this humorous episode, a young woman is plagued by nightmares of churches - including the "phony church" and the "dead church." The video explains that while churches are imperfect places filled with imperfect people, God works within a family of believers to bless the individual and the world.

We will condense the episodes to fit the weeks we have available. Worship will conclude with a Vesper format to prepare us for our travels home and a night of rest.

Please join us to be inspired and to inspire each other,

Blessings and Peace,

Pastor Stan

Choosing well in the New Year...

The beginning of each New Year always brings talk of making resolutions and starting or stopping some habits. As adults we promise ourselves that this is the year we're going to lose those extra ten pounds, stop smoking, get out of debt, make better choices, or fix a broken relationship. Young people might see the new year as an opportunity to start over in certain areas of their lives, to exercise more, to make straight A's, or to get along better with their parents. With resolution-making on our minds, the beginning of 2016 is a great time to think about the commitments we make and consider whether or not we are choosing well.

Commitments say a lot about who we are. Decisions to add or discard habits speak to things that are important to us—health, wholeness, family, relationships, and so forth. When we choose to make commitments, we test ourselves to see if we can be true to our word.

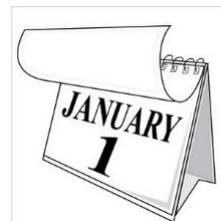
The first of the year is also a great time to think about the whys and the when's of our commitments. Sometimes we over commit or over promise and find ourselves in over our heads. So maybe, instead of a long list of new resolutions or promises this year, we can just resolve to make the best possible choices in our commitments and learn to let each "yes" be yes and each "no" be no.

Making Good Choices

The starting point for choosing well is to examine our current commitments. Begin by asking: *Are my choices meaningful and worthy of my time and effort, or do they just add pressure and expectations?* We all live with so much pressure and expectation that we don't need the added burden of commitments that steal the joy from our daily lives.

Seek God First

A sure way to choose well is to seek first the kingdom of God. When we are in constant communion with God, we are more in tune with our capacity and are able to say yes or no at the right time. In the coming year we will encounter plenty of opportunities that sound too good to pass up. We need to consider saying yes to commitments that are life-giving and saying no to the things that, although fun, only add busyness and pressure to the daily routine. This year challenge yourself to make just one resolution—to say yes to life-giving things and no to life-draining things.



Wishing everyone a blessed New Year!

Julie Fiery, Council President

Baptism

On February 7th, we will celebrate the baptism of Brenda Diane Sharrah at the 8:15 service. We rejoice in Brenda's declaration of faith and entrance into God's church.



Shrove Tuesday/ Mardi Gras

Gathering at the home of Gladys Spessard on Tuesday, February 9th, at 6:30 pm. We will discuss ways to prepare for Lent and enjoy the Fasnachts!

Ash Wednesday

Services will be held at 12:00 pm and 7:00 pm on Ash Wednesday. Come to prepare and start your Lenten journey.



Though it feels like we just finished celebrating Christmas, we are actually approaching the end of Epiphany. Ash Wednesday is February 10, 2016 this year. We will once again need your help with our weekly Lenten dinners beginning on February 17th. Please consider helping with this ministry, check the sign-up sheet located on the bulletin board in the Sacristy hallway.

Thank you!

Worship & Music Committee



Blessing

Prayers for Andrew Steele as he leads a group of leaders and donors of the ELCA Global Church to Cambodia from February 10th- 24th and to Mikahla Stouffer on her mission year in South Africa beginning February 12th. Godspeed to them both as they represent St. Mark's in the sharing of the gospel to the world.

Altar Flowers

God Bless you all as you place your flowers on St. Mark's altar in honor/memory of loved ones. They bring beauty to our church and joy to those who receive them. We have open dates for 2016. They are June 12, July 31 and October 23. If you are interested taking one or more of these dates, please contact Judy Munday at 301-739-4669.



St. Mark's Orchestra and Breakfast

The time has come again to enjoy the wonderful St. Mark's orchestra along with a bite to eat. The next date is February 21st. Come enjoy this great time of fellowship.



Lunch Bunch

The Lunch Bunch will be having their monthly gathering at Maloo's Pub which is located at 325 Virginia Ave. This month, the date is February 16th and the time will be at 1:00 pm. Come and join us and enjoy great food and fellowship.



Praise Team

Next Praise Team rehearsal is Thursday, February 25 at 7:00. (no rehearsals until then)

Sunday School Class

ARK Sunday school class will have a potluck dinner with a movie on Sunday, February 21st 4:30 until 8:30 p.m. Come join the fun!



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 Paul Miner, Wendy Fraker, Mildred Wilson, Mike Harshman, Tom and Reverend Mary Prather, Barbara Warrenfeltz, Faye Seibert, Carol Troxell, Vivian Morris, Jennifer Kneller-Bowers, Paul Ruffner, Rick Zegles, Mary Stouffer, Alex Dodd, Doris Steele, Andrew Steele, Coby Waugh, Teresa Schaefer, Mikahla Stouffer, Jack Brining and family and friends of Edward Harnish.



Each month or two, the church council chooses to highlight one of our ministries and asks that you consider making a monetary donation and offer prayer support for the selected ministry. During the remainder of January and the entire month of February, we ask that you keep our Community Food Bank, its leadership and volunteers, in your thoughts and prayers. As they work together to resolve the recent development with the availability of resources in Washington County, they need to be uplifted in prayer and supported through any means we can offer – this includes monetary donations or the offer of volunteer hours. If you have an interest in volunteering or any other questions pertaining to the Food Bank, please contact Julie Stouffer. Thank you!

Learning Parties

Learning Parties are being held in many counties throughout Maryland. St. Mark's is a host church for the Learning Parties, sponsored in partnership by the United Way of Washington County, Hagerstown Area Religious Council (HARC), St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Grace United Methodist Church, and Washington County Early Childhood Advisory Council. The Learning Parties target families with children ages 3 - 5 to help elevate them for readiness into kindergarten. Each session is one night a week for four consecutive weeks, 5:30 - 7:00 pm. A hot meal is served to the entire family, and nursery and activities are provided for those siblings who are younger or older than the targeted age group. The parents/grandparents/guardians are trained separately from the children, and then, at the end of the evening, the adults and children talk together about what they learned. The adults are given "homework" assignments to practice with the children during the week and report on their activities the following week. If a family attends all four weeks, they receive a donated \$25 gift card, along with other items, such as laundry detergent, books for the children, etc. Learning Parties has multiple training modules, including math, social and emotional, science, and literacy. All instructors have attended formal training on the module being offered. The Learning Parties have become quite popular at St. Mark's; we turned away a large number of families at the last activity due to reaching the maximum number that could be served. Some of the families brought their children back to St. Mark's for Vacation Bible School, the annual Block Party, and for Breakfast with Santa. This is a wonderful outreach to the community, and many relationships between St. Mark's and the families have been developed. During the months of March and April, we will be accepting donations in our donations boxes located around the church for this worthwhile ministry. If you have any questions or would like to volunteer to help with this ministry, please see Elaine Rose.



It's That Time Again!

It seems like we just finished celebrating Christmas and the start of a new year, and we did! But, in a few weeks, Lent will be upon us and it is once again “that time”! The time we think about the things we need to give up or stop doing.

Lent is often a time when we become negative or depressed as well. The focus is usually on our sin and our need for repentance. Often, this time of reflection and of course, the cold dreary weather, becomes a time when it is hard to remain cheerful and excited about our faith.

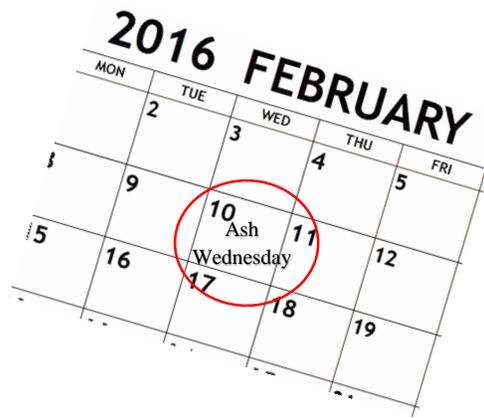
This call to repent and cleanse ourselves from sin is very important, however, it is not the only discipline of Lent in which we are encouraged to participate. Within some Ash Wednesday liturgy is the statement, “As disciples of the Lord Jesus we are called to struggle against everything that leads us away from love of God and neighbor. Repentance, fasting, prayer, and works of love – the discipline of Lent – help us to wage our spiritual warfare.”

Some Christians “give up” certain foods for Lent, which is a type of fasting, while others add more prayers to their daily life as part of their discipline. But what do we do with the “works of love” statement? This year during Lent, let that be part of our focus. *“Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.” Hebrews 13:16.*

Remember that “works of love” refers to action – *“¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” James 2:14-17*

So as we approach the beginning of Lent on February 10, give some thought to not just what you can give up for Lent but rather, what can you **DO** for Lent.

Julie Fiery
Council President



Council Ministry Team Assignments – 2016

- Property: Gary Doub, Brian Delosier
- Finance: Ralph Bartles, Gladys Spessard, Michelle Leatherman, Brian Delosier, Julie Fiery
- Worship & Music: Breann Myers, Rhonda Bowers, Holly Fisher, Julie Fiery
- Stewardship: Stan Stouffer
- Faith Formation (Christian Ed): Kay Hartman, Rhonda Bowers, Julie Fiery
- Community Awareness: Elaine Rose, Stephen Elsen, Holly Fisher
- Friendship: Brian Delosier, Pat Myers, Kay Hartman
- Personnel: Stan Stouffer, Michelle Leatherman, Julie Fiery
- Outreach (Evangelism): Stephen Elsen, Pat Myers
- Endowment: Gary Doub, Stan Stouffer, Brian Delosier
- As President, Julie Fiery is a member of all ministry teams.

If you have a concern or question regarding any of these ministry teams, please see one of the council members listed above.

Highlights from Council Meeting January 6, 2016

- All Members were in attendance.
- Permission granted for old white altar paraments to be donated to St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Sabillasville, Maryland. Pat Gebhart will deliver the paraments.
- Funding approved for Breanna Myers, Mackenzie Gandee and Kim Gandee to attend Delaware-Maryland Synod Youth Road Trip event January 22-24, 2016 at the Clarion Resort Fontainebleau Hotel in Ocean City, MD.
- Community Food Bank ministry selected for donation boxes during the month of January and February.
- Council discussed current issues in regards to Western Maryland Food Bank and the impact of the closing of this facility on our Community Food Bank. Pastor Stan Steele and Julie Stouffer will continue to work with local organizations regarding this problem, council will be updated accordingly.
- Ralph Bartles reported that our 2015 expenses were lower than usual. This along with an increase in offerings during 2015 has resulted in an improved financial situation as we begin 2016.
- Stephen Elsen will continue to work on improvements for the church's sound system.
- The High School/College Department created 75 care packages for those in need within our community. The packages will be available for our congregational members to distribute following the January 10 church services.
- The council discussed repairs needed for the sidewalk and parking lot areas. We will continue to review the concerns and costs of the repairs so that a decision can be made before spring. Costs will be shared with Girls, Inc.
- Executive Officers were elected for the 2016 term: Julie Fiery, President; Gladys Spessard, Vice-President; Holly Fisher, Secretary. Ralph Bartles will be completing his third year as Treasurer of a three-year term.
- The council will be reviewing software resources in regards to purchasing new software that will maintain all church records such as baptisms, weddings, deaths, etc. A small task force will meet this month to continue this discussion.
- **NEXT MEETING – FEBRUARY 3, 2016 AT 6:30 P.M.**

THANK YOU

On behalf of my mom, Shirley, and my brother and his family, I would like to express our deepest, most heartfelt gratitude to the members of St. Mark's. The outpouring of support from this congregation - concern during my father's illness and sympathy after his passing - has been absolutely phenomenal.

While Dad was ill, the folks here were always asking how he was doing ; Pr. Stan visited him in the hospital and sat with us in the ICU waiting room several times.

Since Dad passed away (I still struggle to say that), we have been truly and deeply touched by the number of St. Mark's people who came to the visitation and/or the funeral, and continue to ask Mom and me how we're doing. Then there was the absolutely *gorgeous* flower arrangement sent by the congregation and all the lovely cards and messages that have been sent to both Mom and me , *and* the wonderful luncheon provided for us by the ladies of the Caring Concerns committee (on short notice, too !).

I also want to say thank you to Pr.Stan, the council, and congregation for allowing me to have that first Sunday off and to Pr.Tom for filling in for me that day.

St. Mark's truly is a family, and I thank all of you so very much.

Sincerely,
Kathy Barr

From the Director of Music

I want to extend a **BIG THANK YOU** to all the musicians - singers and instrumentalists - who provided us with such beautiful music on Christmas Eve. All their time and hard work, their talent, and their enthusiasm really help to make our Christmas Eve services quite special. I am blessed to be surrounded by such wonderful musicians. A special thank you to Rick Mogensen who again this year worked tirelessly to arrange for that fabulous ensemble that plays for us every Christmas Eve. What a treat! (It makes my job a bit easier, too.)

* * * * *

Last year our little Cherub Choir had two members. Over the summer, one of them moved several states away, and then there was one - one brave, bold little boy, who when he first joined the Cherub Choir was quite shy. Abe Elsen sang solo in church one Sunday back in the fall, and just blew everyone away ! (The last "solo" Cherub we had was Jacob Bryan a few years back.)

We now have three (possibly four) Cherubs. Abe is our veteran singer, and the "older brother" of the group. Matthew Dawson joined us in November. Matthew and his family are actually members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church (so singing with us on Sundays does not interfere with their attending their own church.) Our families have been friends for a long time, and mom, Tammy, has taken piano lessons from me since before Matthew was born. So Matthew knows me as "Aunt" Kathy. Also, according to Tammy, Matthew's cousin, Molly, *may* be joining this week.

At our first rehearsal in January, Owen Pompa joined us, too. Mom, Lindsay, has played flute with Rick's Sunday School Orchestra and Christmas Eve group since before Owen was born. So you've probably seen Owen around here on "orchestra Sundays" ; and I think he's been attending Sunday School here for the last few months, also.

Our Cherub Choir has really grown - what a blessing and what fun ! I don't think we've had this many children in our Cherub Choir for probably close to 10 years ! So watch for this little group to be singing in church soon.

Your co-worker in Christ,

Kathy Barr



Volunteer Snow Removal

This winter season the City of Hagerstown is working to mobilize volunteers to help seniors and people with disabilities remain safe and keep their sidewalks clear. Through the Snow Angels Program the city acts as a referral entity connecting interested volunteers with elderly and disabled homeowners within city limits in need of assistance with snow removal on their property.*

Are you interested in volunteering?

Interested volunteers are paired with a homeowner in need of assistance for the 2015-2016 Winter Season. The volunteer and homeowner work together to coordinate snow removal. Volunteer applications can be obtained by contacting the Department of Community and Economic Development by phone at 301-739-8577 extension 820 or by e-mail at DCED@hagerstownmd.org.

* The clearing of snow or ice is ultimately the responsibility of the homeowner. The City requirement for snow/ice removal is that all sidewalks be cleared of ice and snow conditions. The clear path must be at least 48" or the entire width of the sidewalk, whichever is less. The code requires that ice and snow accumulations be cleared within 10 hours after the precipitation ends.

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

Thank You

Dear Pastor and Congregation at Saint Mark’s Lutheran Church,
Thank you so much for your generous donation of hats and gloves for Head Start Children. It warms my heart to know that our children will be warmer because of your kindness. On behalf of the staff and management team at Head Start, please accept our deepest appreciation. May you have a Blessed Christmas Season.

Sincerely, Emily **Hobby**

Financial Wellness Classes

Presented by Financial Education Partnership, Washington County, In Collaboration with Washington County Free Library & MD Cash Campaign.

When: Each Wednesday, January 13-February 10, 2016, 2pm & 6pm

Where: Washington County Free Library, 100 S. Potomac Street, Room 334, Hagerstown MD

Topics Include: Daily money management, spending plans vs budgets, savings strategies, taxes and consumer protection.

To Register, Please Contact: Kelli Tencer, Success Coach, Reach of Washington County, 301-733-2371 x 107 **OR** Sign up at the Library Reference Desk.



Happy February Birthday to:

- | | |
|------------------|----------------------|
| 2 Diane Baker | 18 Dorothy Haberbeck |
| 7 Robin Vogel | Stephanie Steele |
| 8 Richard Wiebel | 24 Sara Horn |
| 10 Joshua Fisher | 27 Robert Hovermale |
| 11 Sandy Davis | 29 Kay Clugston |
| 15 Michael Miner | Rob Hovermale |



In Loving Memory

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