



Sweetheart Dinner

February 18 5:00-7:00 pm

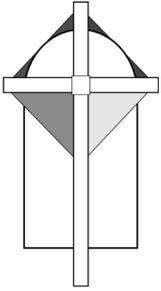
We will be serving spaghetti and meatballs, green beans, cheesy garlic bread, tossed salad and a yummy dessert.

Our entertainment is 100 voices.

Tickets are \$25 per couple and \$15 for a single.

All proceeds will go to the youth groups' trip to the "Youth Gathering" in Houston this summer.

We are very thankful for all the support from everyone.



ST MARK'S
LUTHERAN CHURCH

ST. MARK'S MESSENGER

February 2018
Valley, Nebraska
www.StMarksValleyNE.com
402.359.2315

from the Pastor...



“Prayer is not asking. Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God, at His disposition, and listening to His voice in the depth of our hearts.”

— Mother Teresa

In early Advent during worship one Sunday, I asked you to reflect on prayer; what and for whom you pray, and what is difficult for you regarding prayer and to write it down. We also wrote about rejoicing and about thanking. We wrote our responses on sticky notes and put them on a poster board in the sanctuary. As I look back over that poster, I see that we *do* pray, and we often find it *difficult* to pray. I believe that this is quite normal. Most of us struggle with prayer. We struggle with knowing *how* to pray. We struggle sometimes with believing that God hears us. Some folks even wonder if God cares about our prayers at all. As I read the sticky notes we wrote, I found myself nodding my head yes, in understanding- and at others, finding my eyes welling with tears over our struggles with prayer and faith. Many have a hard time, now and then, believing that our prayers matter-*and* we also struggle to *remember* to pray, and to find time to pray and then to *listen* to God as often as we feel we should. I wish that I could say that I don't have some of these same struggles with prayer, and with God. We *all* have trouble with consistency in prayer, to some degree or another. We have trouble having a relationship with someone we only *feel sometimes*, but don't see. A spiritual relationship can be quite hard-requiring a faith we even doubt at times. My advice, if I have any- is to *push through*. Push through the doubt, push through the inconsistency, and push through the perfectionism and excuses. God loves and accepts us, just as we are and would not want our obvious imperfection to be a reason we won't converse with God.

Simply speak to God as you are, wherever you are-spiritually or physically. Speak of your doubts, worries and cares to God, cast them on him for he longs to help you to strengthen your faith, and to be in relationship with you.

Prayer is a tough thing, but, it is also a great privilege. It is a privilege to come before Almighty God in prayer; in thanksgiving, or petition, or in desperation. We are so privileged to be able to speak, *at any time*, to the creator, the most powerful being in the universe, who loves us and calls us dear children of God. Don't give up, but *push through* the resistance you have to speak, and to listen for the movement of the Spirit of God within you in reply.

Because I believe prayer is so important, but so difficult, I sent away to Thomas Rustert, a Lutheran pastor in Pennsylvania, who began something called the Free Prayer ministry. He sent me a sign to set up when I am in a café or coffee shop and am 'open for business'. The sign says Free Prayer- "Pray, and let God worry." (which is a quote from Martin Luther.) This Lent, I plan to do this sort of risky thing regarding prayer. I intend to spend an hour or so each week in a coffee shop in Valley or Elkhorn, or any other place someone may suggest, with my "Free Prayer" sign up. I'll be reading or having coffee and talking or praying with/for anyone who wants or needs it. It seems a scary proposition, but also a good one. I know the Lord didn't call me to sit in my office all day but to reach out to others, in and out of the congregation and community. You are welcome to come sit and talk or pray with me! I will be announcing where I am, and asking for prayer requests on Facebook, since it seems like the best and quickest way to communicate with folks. I hope you will keep me in prayer; pray for those I may encounter, and for this ministry here among people in our community. I pray you may seek to strengthen your own prayer life this Lent, by praying more consistently and faithfully with and for others. May we seek the powerful leading of God's Spirit together! God *does* answer prayer!

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Barbara

*The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end,
they are new every morning;*

great is thy faithfulness.

Lamentations 3: 22-23

from the PMA...

Connected

This last month I had the experience of purchasing a new cell phone. This is not the most exciting or rewarding way to spend time. First, I had to select a new phone and then the files from the old phone had to be transferred to the new. Finally, the files on the old phone had to be deleted. Because we do phones in duplicate at our house, each step was repeated for my husband's phone and our tablet. I spent 5 hours at the phone store. The entire time I was disconnected from contact with the people I call, text and email. There was no checking Facebook or even visiting with anyone other than the store staff or other customers. I felt totally disconnected for 5 hours.

Having lots of time to think, ponder and meditate, it occurred to me that there are times when we feel disconnected to God. We feel like we have no options. Yet unlike the cell phone scenario, connecting with God is really very simple. We simply have to call out to Him. We don't need to log on, plug in or transfer any files. He knows us and our situation even before we do. He listens and he responds. Don't let cell phone excuses keep you from connecting with God.

Karen



ASH WEDNESDAY

LENT

Lent starts with Ash Wednesday on February 14th,
Watch the bulletins for more information.

Our **Lenten Experience** starts on Wednesday, February 14 with the Ash Wednesday service at 7 p.m. The schedule for the five Wednesdays following Ash Wednesday is as follows:

Lenten Supper	5:30-6:30 p.m.
Clean Up & Preparation for Worship	6:30-7:00 p.m.
Holy Motion	6:30 p.m.
Worship	7:00 p.m.
Choir	7:45 p.m.



Lenten Fasting...some ideas

Must we 'fast' or give up something for Lent to be 'good' Christians? The obvious Lutheran answer is no, we are loved and accepted by God by virtue of what Jesus Christ did for us in dying on the cross and thereby liberating us from the consequences of our sins-which is death.

At Lent, Christians, who cannot give back to God, have used these 40 days to try to become closer to our Lord, whether through fasting, or prayer or almsgiving (helping others, or stewardship).

So no, Lutherans are not required to fast, but, it is hoped that we would use this time to take a good look at ourselves; to 'fast' from habits or activities that may be affecting or hurting our faith, or relationship with God. Here are some ideas, gleaned from many sources about things we might give up for Lent, or things we might 'do' for Lent, all in the hopes of becoming closer to God, in hopes of being a bit different at the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday, than we

will be on Easter morning. What might the Holy Spirit be leading you to do, or to give up this Lenten season? Some ideas of things to give up besides food, in no particular order:

- Write a thank you letter every day of Lent to those who positively impact your life; from your mailman, to your beautician, to family or friends, or anyone who you appreciate, but need to tell. Even if they are no longer with you—write anyway! Don't forget a letter to God, and even harder, to yourself!
- Give up negative speech; such as gossip or complaining. (Philippians 2:14.)
- Give up media, such as Facebook, for Lent and spend the time in prayer or reading a devotional book.
- Commit to memorizing some portion of Scripture that is important to you.
- Go on a clothing fast! That doesn't mean go naked; but choose 12 items of clothing (not including underwear, socks or pajamas) that you will wear for Lent. See if you really need all the clothes you have. What will you experience, or learn from this? This is challenging!
- Throw something away every day for 40 days- (regular garbage doesn't count!)
- Better yet...find something to give away, every day, for 40 days.
- Buy nothing you don't absolutely need, for 40 days.
- Get outside every day for at least 20 minutes, rain, snow, or shine! Walk, journal, take pictures or draw. No phone, unless it is your camera! (No talking on phone!)
- Write a prayer of thanksgiving to God in a journal every day, for Lent.

- Make a family thorn wreath for Lent. Gather around it for daily family devotions or spoken blessings to one another. A good book is *Jesus Calling- 365 Devotions for kids*.
- Tutor a child who needs help in school, become a mentor, or in some way help a child who needs help or support.
- Fast from the radio or music in the car. Use that time to pray. Also, a challenge!
- Pray for those who have hurt you, are difficult to get along with, or are enemies. Pray for God to make their lives happy, fulfilling and joyful. Yes. This *is* hard. Pray for them to thrive. This is difficult but has a great potential to change you. Caution-at first, you won't *feel* this-do it anyway!

Whatever you choose to do, or to give up, do it to become closer to God, or more mindful of the things that keep you from God, or negatively impact the time you spend in prayer, or how you steward your time, or possessions. May we all arrive at Resurrection Day on April 1st, a *bit* different than we began on February 14th!

The Season of Lent

The season of Lent is upon us! Lent officially begins on Ash Wednesday, February 14. We will observe this with a worship service that includes imposition of ashes and communion. For the five Wednesdays following, we will begin with a meal and conclude with a midweek worship service using on the Holden Evening Prayer. The theme for this year is based on the hymn, "Beneath the Cross of Jesus". Each week there will be a focus object. **For the first week, February 21, we ask that you bring a cross from home.** There will be an area to display all crosses that are shared. Please identify/label your cross so that you can take it home after the service. Lent concludes with Holy Week Services on Palm Sunday, March 25; Maundy Thursday, March 29; Good Friday, March 30 and Easter, April 1.



COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

**This is a synopsis of the Council meeting held on
January 16th, 2018.**

- Officers were elected for 2018: Rick Hayden, President; Sharon Wilson, Vice President. Jan Reis was appointed as Secretary/Treasurer.
- New signatures on the bank accounts will be Rick Hayden, Harlan Dreessen and Jan Reis.
- A new bank account will be set up for the Worship Enhancement Project. The monies that will be moved to this account will come from Worship Enhancement/Funding for the Future and Audio/Visual.
- Rick Hayden will be the chair of the outside property and Harlan Dreessen on the inside property.
- There was training sessions for Usher on January 14; Acolytes and Crucifers will be on January 21; and Communion and Worship Assistants on January 18.
- Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 14 with worship at 7 p.m. Beginning on Wednesday, February 21 and running through March 21 Lenten Suppers will be service by different groups. The meals will begin at 5:30 with worship at 7.
- Two worship services will remain until Summer. In the meantime the Council will be working out how to hold just 1 service plus Sunday School.
- The Sherron Fund assisted one family with rent.
- The Worship Enhancement Process will begin the first part of February and hopes are that it will be completed for Easter Sunday.
- An Administration Committee has been formed and the members are Mike Sip, Nate Wittgren, Bob Oshlo, Karen Frost and Pastor Barbara. Gene Griffin will be asked to serve as well.
- The Council is looking into electronic giving and an area in the Narthex where this could take place. The Stewardship Committee will have this under their umbrella.

A PRAYER FOR ST MARK'S COUNCIL

Gracious God, help the council see with increasing clarity the gifts you have given our congregation for serving you by serving others. Amen.

DECEMBER MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT

December Budget = \$18,361
December Expenses = \$16,420
December Giving = \$45,235

YEAR TO DATE FINANCIAL REPORT

January - December Budget = \$220,328
January - December Expenses = \$209,805
January - December Giving = \$225,018

End of year 2016 Balance in Savings = \$50,124
End of December 2017 Balance in Savings = \$50,144
End of December 2017 Balance in Checking = \$89,603
End of December 2017 Worship Enhancement Total = \$51,706

R.E.N.E.W.!!

Refueling- Energy- Needed- Every-Wednesday!

MEAL MENU

All meals include tossed salad and dessert.

February 7 – Chicken Casserole

February 14 – NO MEAL – Ash Wednesday

February 21 –

February 28 –

SCHEDULE FOR LENTEN WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

5:30-6:20 P.M. - Dinner

6:30-7:00 P.M.- Clean Up & Preparation for Worship

6:30 P.M. – Holy Motion

7:00 P.M. – Lenten Worship

7:45 P.M. - Choir

See you soon!

R.E.N.E.W. can fill empty tummies and fatigued souls!

FEBRUARY NEWS FOR WOMEN OF ST. MARK'S

FAITH CIRCLE NEWS

FAITH Circle will meet on **Tuesday, Feb. 6 at 1 p.m.** at the church for its Feb. meeting. Bible Study leader is Linda George and hostesses are Sandy Trofholz and Jean Kramer. Our Bible Study is from the *GATHER* magazine and the title of the study is *Prepare The Way of the Lord* based on Luke 3:3-17. Anyone is invited to join our discussion. Refreshments will follow.

FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE NEWS

Our next meeting will be on **Monday, Feb. 5th, at 6:30 PM.** We will continue our Study of "Contagious Joy" Chapter 9 our Study Leader will be Linda Ryan and Joyce Olsen will be our Hostess.

Please join us for an evening of fellowship & study.

JOY CIRCLE NEWS

Joy Circle will meet on **Sunday, February 4, 2018 at 9:15 a.m.** in the Sunday School Office. Please join us for Bible Study and Fellowship.

PEACE CIRCLE NEWS

Peace Circle will meet on **Tuesday, February 13 at 7:00 p.m.** All are welcome.

Thank You

Praises and thanks from the family of Rachelle Vencil. We would like to thank everyone for the messages of sympathy, food, flowers and memorials in honor of Shelly. Thank you to Pastor Barbara Oshlo for her love and prayers, and a special thank you to Pastor Clay Skurdahl for his comforting words and funeral services.

Love and gratitude, Donna Fintel and family



Stewarding our Stuff!

Yes, everything we have is a gift from God! We are grateful for *all* God has given. Sometimes, we adm it, we have kept things too long, bought too much, or simply need to lighten our walk through life by throwing things away, giving to family or friends, or sharing with those in need.

The stewardship committee has chosen this theme for the next couple of months, for us to concentrate on. In that regard, we have a few activities we hope will be encouraging for us at St. Mark's to de-clutter the stuff in our lives.

- We will be letting the congregation know where to safely and responsibly dispose of things locally, like:

Paint and chemicals

Electronic devices

(such as phones, computers, printers and the like)

Eyeglasses

Magazines

Books

Clothing

Toys

Furniture and appliances

- We intend to hire a dumpster to be in the parking lot for a short time, so that people may be encouraged to throw things away that cannot be re-used or recycled. Date to be determined...
- We will have a large industrial shredder brought to the lot so that people may safely dispose of old papers and records that need no longer be kept. Also, date to be determined...

The committee welcomes any other ideas you may have in this regard, to helping us *steward our stuff!* Please, do not bring items to the church unless specifically requested, as we are short on room and cannot store items. *If you have it in mind to donate anything to church, please do not do so unless the donation has been approved by the church council.

Stewardship committee will be sponsoring a church clean up and organization day in the Spring! Folks will be invited to help us clean up after the construction project, spruce up the outdoors and help us to throw out and organize!

What might you need to think out letting go of or getting rid of in the next couple of months???

The **COPE** pantry is currently running low on the following items:

Pancake Mix & Pancake Syrup	Paper Towels
Ketchup	Toilet Paper
Ranch Dressing	Kleenex
Jelly or Jam	Laundry Detergent
Instant Box Potatoes	Cereal
Spaghetti O's	

**Special note...COPE is helping approx. 40 families per week with grocery items. Thank you for your support of this outreach program. It is so appreciated by those in need.

PEACE CIRCLE

February Soldier Group

Brandon Mayer

US Army

Location: Niger

Attn: Any Soldier

Representing: 25 Males 2 Females

AOB 3110, Niamey PSC 64

PO Box 347

APO AE 09861



Brandon Mayer writes: We live in tents and each have a 8 x 8 wooden room. We have access to a microwave, washer, dryer, frig, freezer, and electricity. The items we receive will be shared with our entire special forces command unit of 27 soldiers.

We are requesting: Individual snacks/////laundry pods

Pack & Pray ...Sunday, Feb. 25th, 2018

Postage funds are always appreciated.

Please pray for our soldiers and their families.

January Report: 4 boxes were sent to our Ryan Erdman in Kuwait

**This email was received in the Church Office on January
21st.**

Thank you so much for supporting us troops here in Baghdad, Iraq! Your care package truly raised moral in our unit. We appreciate all the hard work, love, and patriotism it took to create and mail out the package you sent. All the items were distributed throughout our medical team. We are the 47th Combat Support Hospital based out of Fort Lewis, WA. We will be deployed until the end of June and appreciate your dedication to us deployed soldiers!

P.S. please see attached pictures

Respectfully,
Morgan D. Jaffray
CPT, AN
Emergency Nurse
TF MED 47, Role III
Operation Inherent Resolve
BDSC, APO AE 09305
CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED





Clothing Drive

Faith Circle will once again resume their Fall/Winter clothing drive.. We are initiating some changes/guidelines. We will accept only warm and outer wear such as sweaters, sweatshirts, sweatpants, jackets, winter vests, gloves, caps, mufflers and boots. As in the past we respectfully request items be clean, gently used and in good repair. If anyone has a specific place they would like to have receive the donations throughout the winter, please call Sandy Trofholz at [402-932-0700](tel:402-932-0700). We have several places we alternate taking items, but are open to new suggestions.



The apparel donations grey plastic container is located in the Fellowship Hall. In the past, St. Mark's members have been very dedicated and generous purporting this project, and we thank you in advance for you continued support.



FIRST COMMUNION FAMILY RETREAT

The First Communion Family Retreat is designed to help our families at St. Mark's discern if their child is ready and desires to take their First

Communion. ST. Mark's has no age requirement for First Communion. The decision is ultimately up to the parents and the child to decide when their child is ready. If your child has been asking questions about Holy Communion, consider attending this Retreat. Attending the retreat does NOT automatically commit your child into taking their First Communion. In the past, some parents after attending the retreat, have chosen to wait longer.

A date has not been set yet but the Retreat will be scheduled before Holy Week. We are now seeking WHO would be interested at this time, and what ages of the students. It's normally held on a Sunday afternoon from Noon - 2 P.M.

Please notify Church Secretary Jan Reis at [402-359-2315](tel:402-359-2315) before Feb. 18, 2018 if your child would be interested in this Retreat. We ask that at least one parent attends with their child but the entire family is invited to come. We would like to coincide the first opportunity for taking their First Communion with Maundy Thursday, March 29, 2018. But the family makes the decision WHEN their child's First Communion will take place, so if they wish to take their First Communion at a Sunday worship service, it can be scheduled. If you have any questions, please contact Sharon Josoff at [402-625-2704](tel:402-625-2704) or josoff1@windstream.net.

The Retreat is a 2 hour "mini-retreat" filled with fun activities, learning about the Passover, making their own unleavened bread, a short video, making a banner to commemorate the date, and a lesson on "manners at communion". A light lunch will be served to all attending as well.

HOSPICE VOLUNTEER EDUCATION

March 2018

Hospice Volunteers provide companionship for individuals living with terminal illnesses and their families. Volunteers choose the hours they are able to serve and determine the geographical location in metro Omaha/Council Bluffs and surrounding area. Volunteer education will take place in March and is sponsored by CHI Health at Home Hospice, Methodist Hospice, VNA Hospice and Hospice House – The Josie Harper Residence .

Please call one of the agencies below to request an application. Celeste Feuerbach, VNA Hospice 930-4143; Roz Merrick, Methodist Hospice 354-3200; Mary Pendell, CHI Health at Home Hospice, 989-8239' and Brittany Dymm, Hospital House 3438600.



COMMUNITY
BIBLE STUDY

Community Bible Study scheduled- and YOU are invited!

I never thought that I would live to see this, but...*the times, they are a changin'*! I received a recent email from Molly at St. John's Catholic church inviting St. Mark's members to be part of a Community Bible Study, hosted by St. John's at 307 E. Meigs St., Valley. Here is the important information from the invite I received. I went to the website video listed at the end of this and it looks pretty cool! It is free, it is for people no matter where they are on their spiritual journey. The bible study is for 11 weeks, and

incorporates a supper meal, videos and small table discussion. The name of the bible study is ALPHA. Below is the pertinent info:

Bible Study Name: ALPHA

What: Weekly dinner provided, ALPHA film series movie and small table discussion

When: Thursday nights March 1st-May 17th 6:00pm-7:30pm

Where: St. John Church, [307 E. Meigs Street, Valley NE 68064](#)

Why: Everyone welcome! No matter where you are at in your spiritual journey, or even just beginning, come join us March 1st and see what it's all about!!!

RSVP: Molly Zach [402-359-5783](tel:402-359-5783) or molly@stjohnvalleyne.com

1-Name of guest(s)

2-Contact email address

3-Any names of requested friends/spouse to sit at your

table

To view the ALPHA trailer go to: <https://vimeo.com/204052948>

Yes, we all belong to different denominations, here in Valley. Yes, we do not all agree on every single element of doctrine. But, I believe this study will focus on God and Christ, and all that we do agree on—along with the spiritual questions that we all wrestle with from time to time. I hope, and pray(!), that you will join Bob and me as we come together with others in our community to celebrate and learn more about our faith and our neighbors. I see this as a wonderful opportunity that we have *uniquely* in Valley, where we also share VBS with United Faith and St. John's. Many may doubt that Lutherans and Catholics and Baptist/Methodist/Presbyterians can all have a bible study together, but I seriously believe that this is something Jesus had in mind when he prayed in John 17:11 'that they would be one'. I think it will be educational, interesting and exciting!

Who will take the first step with us, in response to St. John's invitation??

There is, of course, a sign-up sheet! We need to let them know how many will be coming!

Funds raised by the women of St. Marks go to support many programs sponsored by the NE Synod of the ELCA. Also thru our community outreach we make donations to fund many Service Organizations in the surrounding communities. Listed below are the organizations we gave donations to this fiscal year (2016-17) and the amount given.

We want to thank the members of St. Marks for their continued support in helping make these donations possible.

Charitable Giving for 2017/18

	<u>Amount</u>
Campus Ministries	\$100.00
Care-A-Van, Inc.	500.00
Women's Fund of Omaha	65.00
Prison Ministries	100.00
Lutheran Family Services	65.00
Women of ELCA-Seminarian Scholarship Fund	65.00
NE Children's Home Society	65.00
Nebraska Lutheran Outdoor Ministries	100.00
Sharron Fund	165.00
Table Grace Cafe	65.00
The Bag Ladies of Waterloo	65.00
COPE	<u>500.00</u>
Total	\$1855.00