



ST MARK'S
LUTHERAN CHURCH

ST. MARK'S MESSENGER

May, June 2023
Valley, Nebraska
www.StMarksValleyNE.com
402.359.2315

from the Pastor...



Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice!
Philippians 4:4

I remember about 5 or so years ago, when vacation time rolled around, and we were concerned about remembering to 'take Jesus with us' on vacation! So, we did a little project where we passed out cutouts of 'Flat Jesus' you could color or decorate. He got glued to a tongue depressor and off you went! You could take selfies of yourself and *Flat Jesus* wherever you went and send them into us at church. Now, I think we still have a few of those *Flat Jesus's* around here somewhere—but the thing that is different and has really changed over the years is that NOW, you can take your church with you on vacation!

We worried about folks becoming disconnected from the church and community over long vacation periods back then. And still I would urge you to take your faith along with you wherever you are headed this summer—a few suggestions later in this newsletter! But what has really changed over these last three years because of the pandemic is that you can take *us* with you wherever you go this summer! No—you don't have the expense or annoyance of bringing us **all** with you—no reservations or extra tents are needed!

But if you have an internet connection, wherever you are in the world, you can tune into the St. Mark's Facebook page or our website (www.stmarksvalleyne.com) and you will be with us!

It's one of those crazy but good-unintended consequences of enduring the pandemic. We were forced into livestreaming if we wanted to stay connected to our people and vice versa! Who knew such good would come out of such a scary and difficult experience? And yet...it did!

Since we have been re-gathered as the church in person—post-pandemic, I have noticed a few differences or changes. Perhaps it is too soon to say whether they are good or not—but I think they are ultimately good—because we've learned a few things. This list is not final or exhaustive, but I think we learned for sure **never to take for granted the enormous blessing of being able to worship together in person!**

I don't know if it is just because I am a Pastor but, I physically ached at not being able to see people! Ached, not to be able to greet one another with a smile or a hug! It felt so hard not to see expressions or smiles. For me, a hugger- it felt like punishment **not** to hug people. It made me realize how important that time of greeting after the service is—to actually see how folks are doing. I don't miss wearing a mask. I don't miss social distancing. I don't miss worrying about keeping people safe from my 'vapor cloud' or causing someone to be sick. I don't miss those things. I don't miss those days. But—ultimately, the pandemic brought good in some unexpected ways.

I am so happy to hear voices singing in church again! How wonderful to have the choir again, the bells and kids up front for the Children's sermon! How beautiful to see all the faces gathered, to hear voices together reciting the Creeds and the prayers! These things were **all missing** in the depths of the pandemic! But even more, for me, it is holy and wonderful to be able to give communion again as we gather at the altar railing and not the parking lot-though we were happy even for that, at the time! Such losses we endured! Things we NEVER expected to lose—hugs for the grieving, communion, seeing each other's faces, community meals, family celebrations, worship! **Together!!** It seems as if it took a pandemic, filled with losses to teach us *how very blessed* we are! And...I think

that we have gotten the message the pandemic taught us.

Gratitude. Gratitude for worship and all it contains and offers. Gratitude for our church family! Each individual member, and child- a precious gift from God! Gratitude for life, and life as we live it out as a faith community. Worshipping our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer together. Gratitude for the solace, support and the joy this community imparts!

I do admit that we might be a bit more loudly joyous about being in one another's company than ever before. We were always friendly-we are more so. We were always faithful, but I feel there's been an upswelling of faith here! St. Mark's is still here after this pandemic because you all decided that you wanted and needed your church to be here! It was the faithfulness of this community that kept the church from closing its doors forever. Some churches didn't make it through the changes and difficulties that the pandemic presented. I thank God for your faithfulness, and it is with joy that I witness the somewhat raucous passing of the peace lately. But, I believe that I know what is behind it—gratefulness to God!

In Christ,
Pastor Barbara

~A Few Ideas for Taking your Faith with you this Summer~

- Download a good Bible app to your phone. That way you'll always have your Bible with you. Google Bible reading plans and see if one appeals to you. Set an intention to read God's word and to learn more! *"Let God's word dwell with you richly!"* Colossians 3:16
- Go for walks in the Creation with the Lord—whether it is a simple country road, a city park, or the magnificence of mountains, lakes or rivers—enjoy what God has created and be intentional- tell the Lord about how wonderful it is! Give him thanks!
- Take along a journal or notebook and write to God—for some, that is their best way to communicate with God—try something new while on vacation.

- Find a podcast to listen to that is centered around some aspect of faith. Stretch yourself!
- Write an article to share with us in our newsletter about your travels and experiences of God in a new geography or new place. Seriously!
- Attend church with us online, of course—or find a church to attend! Bring us a bulletin! Did you like it? What would you change? What did you enjoy?

Wherever you go—whatever you do, may God bless you and keep you until we are together again!
Enjoy! +Pastor

from the PMA...

MAINTENANCE

My father was a mechanic and as such, he took great care to make sure our vehicles were all well cared for and safe to drive. At one point, just the thought of driving from our rural home to the big city of Omaha or Lincoln would warrant an oil and filter change and airing up the tires to capacity. I appreciate how he cared for all of the vehicles we ever owned or drove. Now, most car maintenance is in the hands of dealers and service companies. The advancement in the mechanical makeup of vehicles has pretty much left car owners unable to perform maintenance on their own vehicle.

This made me think of our faith maintenance. Where at one time, each person was responsible for the care and safety of their faith journey, we often simply don't perform those tasks that keep our faith strong. We rely on others, the professionals, to remind us and keep our faith. We may not feel that we are equipped to keep our faith strong...but we are. By performing simple tasks of prayer, praise, worship and service, we can proceed on our faith journey with confidence that we have what it takes to get us there. No matter the length of our faith journey, the destination is worth our effort.

Karen



Church Secretary, Jan Reis, is a **General Notary Public**. This service is available to the congregation at no charge.

In trying to reduce costs during the summer, the Council voted to decrease newsletters to every other month. (May and June will be combined into one and be mailed out in May. July and August will be put into another. The July and August will be mailed in July.)

We are also looking into going "paper-less" in the near future. More info to come on that matter at a later date.

Debbie Hascall
Council President



COPE -- Enjoy a delicious cooked-to-order **Breakfast** to benefit COPE and families in western Douglas County. When: Sunday, May 21, from 8:30 a.m. to noon. Where: Elkhorn Eagles B uilding, 20276 Wirt Street, Elkhorn (east of Kwik Shop off 204th Street).

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Karen King who has become the Chair of the Synod PMA Steering Committee!



COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

This is the synopsis of the Council meeting held on
April 11, 2023.

- Family Game Night went well. The group is talking about doing it Spring and Fall.
- Pastor informed the Council of a serious neck issue that needs to be addressed in the future, with surgery.
- The last day of Sunday School is May 14, 2023. Sunday School will resume again in the Fall.
- A \$250 gift card from Thrivent will be used for the Valley Days Pancake Feed.
- Spring Outdoor Clean Up will be held at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, April 29, 2023.
- It has been suggested that steel posts be used for the new Prayer Garden fence.
- Storage cabinets will be built in the Fellowship Hall for things related to Music Ministry.
- Joyce Snide will order 25 more St. Mark's t-shirts.
- Quarterly reports were received from WELCA, Karen King, Bob Jepsen, Men In Mission and COPE.
- During the summer, the newsletter will go out April, May, July and then monthly in September.
- A volunteer is needed to take the collected groceries to COPE when the cart is full. The phone number for COPE is 402-616-2330 if you have questions.
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A PRAYER FOR ST MARK'S COUNCIL
Creator God, give our leaders fresh inspiration to
discover new ways to reach our communities with your
message of grace. Amen.

MAY NEWS FOR WOMEN OF ST. MARK'S

FAITH CIRCLE NEWS

FAITH CIRCLE will meet on **Tuesday May 2** in Fellowship Hall. Sandy Gunnerson will lead our Bible Study and Hostess will be Pat Stiefel. Our quilting dates for May are May 8 (Monday) and May 26 (Thursday). Hope you'll join us.

FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE NEWS

We met on April 3rd with 6 members in attendance. Teri Dreessen led our Bible Study from "Gather" and Bert Harrifeld served as Hostess.

Our next meeting will be on **Monday, May 1st at 6:30** with Bert Harrifeld leading our Study and Marilyn serving as Hostess.

JOY/PEACE CIRCLE NEWS

The Joy & Peace Circle will gather at Bev's home on **Saturday, May 6, at 9:30 a.m.**

Susie will lead the discussion of Part 5, "*The God Who Gave Us Laughter*," the final chapter of our study.

Watch for the School Collection information in bulletins and newsletters during the summer months. This outreach provides supplies for our children.

"May the God of hope fill you with all **joy** and **peace** as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."
Romans 15:13 NIV

*Summer
Worship
9:30AM*



A volunteer is needed to take the collected groceries COPE when the cart is full. The phone number for COPE is 402-616-2330 if you have questions.



On May 21, 2023, St. Mark's will be recognizing all graduates, both from high school and college. We would like to include your names in the June newsletter. In order to do so, we need the correct spelling of your name and the school from where you are graduating **and** your future plans. **College grads**, please list the degree you are graduating with. Please use the sign-up sheet on the Welcome Desk or call the Church Office with your information.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Victims of domestic violence often leave their homes in haste, with no more than the clothes on their backs. These personal items help aid in the transitioning into a safer environment.



Suggested items that can be used:

- Toothpaste/toothbrush
- Deodorant
- Tampons
- Magazines or books
- Shampoo/conditioners
(hotel samples are great)
- Small stuffed animals – new or slightly used
- Tote bag or grocery-type recycle bags
- Old cell phones (used for 911 only)
- Comb/bush
- Body wash/body lotions
- diapers
- Gently used suit cases

Please begin collecting these items at your home and we will let you know where to bring the items. The collections dates are from May 5 to June 30.

MARCH MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT

March Budget = \$24,045
March Expenses = \$24,858
March Giving = \$26,462

YEAR TO DATE FINANCIAL REPORT

January – March Budget = \$72,135
January – March Expenses = \$71,555
January – March Giving = \$60,954

End of year 2022 Balance in Savings = \$64,404
End of March 2023 Balance in Savings = \$64,404
End of March 2023 Balance in Checking = \$6,748
End of March 2023 Worship Enhancement Total = \$4,530

If summer takes you away from St. Mark's on Sundays, don't forget your offering is still important. Thanks!!



Birthdays in May



It has been requested to have personal birthdates put in the newsletter. If we are going to do this, we need you to be sure that we have your birth date.

Please let the church office know your date if you have not already done so.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE FOLLOWING:

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 – Carolyn Chaffin | 22 – Matthew Allen |
| 2 – John Denker | 22 – Mya Kerwin |
| 2 – Cacie Calek | 23 – Michael McKie |
| 5 – Jacqueline Stanzel | 23 – Micky Nielsen |
| 7 – Greyson Peters | 24 – Abigayle Burkholder |
| 8 – Kristi Saathoff | 24 – Nicholas Stanzel |
| 9 – Matthew McGaughey | 25 – Karen Frost |
| 11 – Jack Floody | 25 – Dylan MacDonald |
| 11 – Misty Wilson | 26 – Cheryl Benke |
| 11 – Nora Wittgren | 27 – Stan Gitt |
| 14 – Jacob Hackworth | 28 – Bev Griffin |
| 14 – Ryan Hackworth | 29 – Monica Burkholder |
| 15 – Helen Kirchmann | 29 – John Niemoth |
| 17 – Julissa Bakken | 30 – Brooks Hinrichs |
| 18 – Colton Feist | 30 – Elly Kennec |
| 18 – Hayden Lewis | 30 – Grant Mayer |
| 19 – Lonnie Peterson | 30 – Bill Richards |
| 21 – Jennifer Arp | 30 – Peggy Saathoff |
| | 31 – Cheryl Marshall |

Birthdays in June



It has been requested to have personal birthdates put in the newsletter. If we are going to do this we need you to be sure that we have your birth date.

Please let the church office know your date if you have not already done so.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE FOLLOWING"

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 – Charley Chvatal | 16 – Cal Peacock |
| 3 – Chase Feist | 16 – Pat Stiefel |
| 3 – Samantha Hemphill | 20 – Michael Stanzel |
| 3 – Desiree Katsampes | 21 – Donna Fintel |
| 3 – Dillon Saathoff | 21 – Tim Hackworth |
| 5 – Gary Franklin | 21 – Kahlan Mouse |
| 5 – Jerron Oltjenbruns | 21 – Jodeen Thompson |
| 6 – Jeffrey Allen | 22 – James Kinstler |
| 6 – Michael Hamsa | 23 – Joe Lathrop |
| 7 – Julie Feist | 23 – Kim Shunk |
| 7 – Bob Hayden | 24 – Haley Foutch |
| 9 – Matalyn Royuk | 24 – Jami McKamy |
| 11 – Abby Kennec | 25 – Jerry Gunnerson |
| 16 – Mickey Dyas | 29 – Michaela Larsen |



Quilting dates for May are May 8 (Monday) and May 26 (Thursday).
Many hands make light work.

SCRIPTURES FOR SUNDAYS IN MAY 2023

May 7

Fifth Sunday of Easter

First Reading	Acts 7:55-60
Responsive Reading	Psalms 31:1-5, 15-26
Second Reading	1 Peter 2:2-10
Gospel Reading	John 14:1-14

May 14

Sixth Sunday of Easter

First Reading	Acts 17:22-31
Responsive Reading	Psalms 66:8-20
Second Reading	1 Peter 3:13-22
Gospel Reading	John 14:15-21

May 21

Seventh Sunday of Easter

First Reading	Acts 1:6-14
Responsive Reading	Psalms 68:1-10, 32-35
Second Reading	1 Peter 4: 12-14,; 5:6-11
Gospel Reading	John 17:1-11

May 28

Day of Pentecost

First Reading	Acts 2:1-21
Responsive Reading	Psalms 104:24-34, 35b
Second Reading	1 Corinthians 12:3b-13
Gospel Reading	John 20:19-23

SCRIPTURES FOR SUNDAYS IN JUNE 2023

June 4

Holy Trinity

First Reading	Genesis 1:1—2:4a
Responsive Reading	Psalm 8
Second Reading	2 Corinthians 13:11-13
Gospel Reading	Matthew 28:16-20

June 11

Second Sunday after Pentecost

First Reading	Hosea 5:15—6:6
Responsive Reading	Psalm 50:7-15
Second Reading	Romans 4:13-25
Gospel Reading	Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

June 18

Third Sunday after Pentecost

First Reading	Exodus 19:2-8a
Responsive Reading	Psalm 100
Second Reading	Romans 5:1-8
Gospel Reading	Matthew 9:35—10:8 [9-23]

June 25

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

First Reading	Jeremiah 20:7-13
Responsive Reading	Psalm 69:7-10 [11-15] 16-18
Second Reading	Romans 6:1b-11
Gospel Reading	Matthew 10:24-39

Thank You

The greatest comfort during my procedure and recovery was the expression of good wishes conveyed to me in many ways. I appreciate your thoughtfulness and thank you most sincerely.

Bev Griffin

To the ladies that send out birthday, holiday, cards, etc. to all the shut ins, I want to thank you for this blessing. I so enjoy receiving them as I am sure all do and look forward to the next one.

MaryLou Finn



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From Laughing with Lutherans

I left my 11-year-old son home one evening while I went to my older daughter's school concert. He called me five times while I was driving home, frightened because a thunderstorm was brewing. When I got home I sat in bed with him and snuggled. He said, "Mom, I think after God got done making thunder and lightning, that's when he decided he needed to make mamas."