

ST MARK'S
LUTHERAN CHURCH

ST. MARK'S MESSENGER

May 2024

Valley, Nebraska

www.StMarksValleyNE.com

402.359.2315

from the Pastor...



...bearing with one another in love, make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Eph.4:2b-3

Most of us are familiar with the post-game handshakes that are shared after a sports event.

The teams line up, and coaches usually tell kids that it is important to look the other player you are shaking hands with, in the eye and especially if you are the losing team, to congratulate them on the win and a game well-played. It is called sportsmanship, and we expect kids to learn to be good losers, and gracious winners. When it doesn't happen, we are somewhat indignant or unhappy if someone wasn't a 'good loser'. The handshake declares that the two sides are now 'at peace', after the competition. The thing is—our actions often speak loudly—gestures, even seemingly simple ones, are important!

In church we make a lot of significant gestures; we stand when the cross of Christ enters the sanctuary, we observe silence before the service so that people who desire to may prepare their hearts to worship or pray, we make the sign of the cross, we dip our fingers in the font to remember our baptism, we bow our heads to pray, we stand for the reading of the gospel. These simple gestures point to something sacred and spiritual—we might call it physical theology—linking the visible with the invisible.

Today I write to speak about the passing of the peace—you know, that often-raucous time here at St. Mark's where it seems we must greet everyone or else! Please, don't misunderstand me—I **am so grateful that we are a friendly church**-where people genuinely

care about one another!! Please, if nothing else in this article—
please hear me say that!!

But... (you knew that was coming, right?) but, we are moving the Passing of the Peace in our service, and since it matters to us, as we are a liturgical church—I want to say a bit more about that—*why* we pass the peace, and why we are moving it.

Believe it or not, the passing of the peace is **not** to give us a ‘foretaste of the coffee hour to come’! It is a reminder that we don’t worship in a vacuum, that we worship in community—and while we DO NOT need to greet everyone during the peace, it **is** a theologically important practice. It is actually an ancient practice of the early church—where it was practiced with sharing the ‘kiss of peace’. I am not advocating a return to **that** practice, because it is not a tradition that we would be comfortable with in our culture. (Southern Europeans and Middle Eastern people are more comfortable with that type of greeting, generally.) But it **is** an important theological practice that was let go of by the ‘modern church’ sometime back in the 1800’s and then it was more recently (in the last 40 years or so) added back to the worship services of most Christian denominations, because it **is** significant and important.

Maybe it is easier to say what the peace is not—it is not people being polite and saying a quick ‘hello-how are you’, and ‘what salad are you making for the luncheon next week’? It is a practice that is rooted in Scripture since Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you, my peace I give to you’- John 14:27. This is not any old meaningless peace we say in an off-handed way...we are sharing with others *Christ’s peace*—which the world cannot give! It is a peace that abides and that passes all understanding. That is the peace which we are passing to one another in worship—wishing them God’s deepest peace—the peace of the risen Jesus.

The peace, as we have been observing it, is probably more of a welcoming—and, of course, that is good. But it certainly can be done before the service in the Narthex (before entering the sanctuary, reverently) or it can joyfully be done after the service in our coffee fellowship! Goodness, I sure hope THAT will continue to be loud and friendly!

The peace that I am speaking of calls us to a more significant gesture than mere greeting. For what we are truly doing is preparing ourselves to go to the altar to receive Communion. It is a time of putting our hearts right. This time of peace allows us to seek out those we may have hurt, or been hurt by, or simply struggle with, and allow our hearts to wish them Christ's deepest peace and not only them—but all our brothers and sisters in Christ seated nearby. It is how we go to Communion with a clean heart to receive Christ's own forgiveness and peace—by extending it to others in real time.

We are moving the passing of the peace to its proper place in the worship service, right after the prayers and before Communion. We are called to be reconciled with one another *before* we give our gifts, and to forgive, if we want to be forgiven. So, by this simple gesture of a handshake or hug, in the passing of Christ's peace, we are participating in a profound and God pleasing expression of reconciliation, unity and connectedness!

May our love for one another show forth in many ways; in our kind smiles and welcomes, in our collective reverence before God in worship and our desire for each person to receive the deep and abiding peace of Christ in their lives.

Thanks for listening to this 'teaching moment' as I try to help us all train our hearts and minds into the way of Christ's deep and abiding peace in worship.

May the peace of the risen Christ be with you always,

+Pastor Barbara

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.

from the PMA...

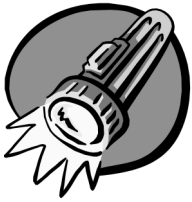
PLEASE SIGN IN

Years ago, we used to have attendance pads in each pew. Worshippers were expected to sign the pad and pass it down the pew to facilitate getting to know one another, and, also to serve as a record of attendance. During the pandemic, we could not pass the pads due to touch protocols and the attendance pads were placed on the welcome center with sanitized pens for worshippers to sign. It seemed clumsy at first, but we have grown to appreciate the signatures as a way of getting to know our members and visitors. Sadly, many times we simply can't remember the names of visitors or even some extended family of our members. This clumsy form of communication has helped us to identify visitors and to greet them by name during the sacrament. When our long time members sign in, it models behavior for those infrequent visitors. It is just a good thing! Keep it up and keep moving. Once we sign in, we need to move along and take our conversations away from the sign in desk. Out of courtesy for others and an expression of hospitality, we can carry on conversations in the more spacious area of the narthex before we enter the sanctuary before the service for meditation and quiet reflection. There is always an opportunity for conversations in the fellowship hall following worship. Please continue to sign in.

PMA Karen



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



COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

This is the synopsis of the Council meeting held on
April 9, 2024.

- Council is going to consider a new Mission Statement
- HR is in the process of setting guidelines and will submit their recommendations to the Council.
- Pastor Barbara is planning on vacation beginning May 10 - 24, 2024.
- St. Mark's is adopting a portion of Meigs street from the city to be responsible for cleaning up up periodically.
- A Council Leadership Training event via zoom will be held on Saturday, April 13 from 9 to 12.
- The Spring Clean Up will be held on Saturday, April 20, 2024 starting at 9:00 a.m.
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GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP



Designed by 123freevectors.com

If you have lost a loved one and would like to attend a Grief Support Group, please indicate your interest by calling Carmen Dau, (402-670-4439) or Karen Authier (402-639-9155). This support group will begin meeting together this summer. This is an opportunity for anyone who has lost a loved one. You do not need to be a member of St. Mark's.

MAY NEWS FOR WOMEN OF ST. MARK'S

FAITH CIRCLE NEWS

Faith Circle will meet on *Tuesday, May 7* for their May meeting at church. Time is 1 p.m. and we will discuss the 9th Chapter of our book on Mary and Martha. Sandy Gunnerson will lead our study and Carmen will provide refreshments.

FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE NEWS

JOY/PEACE CIRCLE NEWS



On May 19, 2024, 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 call the Church Office with your information or email it to secretary@stmarksvalleyne.com.

The Place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.

Frederick Buechner

Wishful Thinking: A theological ABC

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
- Children's books
- Tote bag or grocery-type recycle bags
- Old cell phones (used for 911 only)
- Comb/brush.
- Body wash/body lotions
- diapers
- Gently used suitcases

The collections dates are from May 1 to June 30.

MARCH MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT

March Budget = \$23,355

March Expenses = \$21,766

March Giving = \$24,397

YEAR TO DATE FINANCIAL REPORT

January – March Budget = \$70,074

January – March Expenses = \$70,342

January – March Giving = \$60,247

End of year 2023 Balance in Savings = \$24,282

End of March 2024 Balance in Savings = \$26,346

End of March 2024 Balance in Checking = \$7,356

End of March 2024 Worship Enhancement Total = \$414

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



Quilting days for this month are Monday, May 13, Tuesday, May 21 and Thursday, May 30.

We are trying to include some extra sessions for the summer months and there will be dates added in June, July and August and there will be emails sent out on those as well.

INFORMATION NEEDED

If you know of a member who is ill, hospitalized, or grieving the loss of someone, please let the church office know. The Evangelism Committee will be notified and will send out cards to cheer them up and to let them know that others are praying for them. Please let us know as soon as possible so that the cards arrive in a timely fashion.



SCRIPTURES FOR SUNDAYS IN MAY 2024

May 5

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Confirmation Day

First Reading	Acts 10:44-48
Responsive Reading	Psalm 98
Second Reading	1 John 5:1-6
Gospel Reading	John 15:9-17

May 12

Seventh Sunday of Easter

Mother's Day

First Reading	Acts 1:15-17, 21-26
Responsive Reading	Psalm 1
Second Reading	1John 5:9-13
Gospel Reading	John 17:6-19

May 19

Day of Pentecost

First Reading	Ezekiel 37:1-14
Responsive Reading	Psalm 104:24-34, 35b
Second Reading	Acts 2:1-21
Gospel Reading	John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

May 26

The Holy Trinity

First Reading	Isaiah 6:1-8
Responsive Reading	Psalm 29
Second Reading	Romans 8:12-17
Gospel Reading	John 3:1-17

Birthdays in May

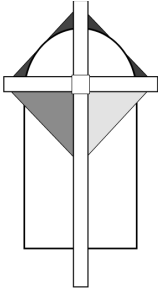


It has been requested to have personal birthdates put in the newsletter. If we are going to do this we need you to be sure that we have your birth date.

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

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE FOLLOWING:

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 – Carolyn Chaffin | 21 – Jennifer Arp |
| 2 – John Denker | 22 – Matthew Allen |
| 2 – Cacie Calek | 22 – Mya Kerwin |
| 5 – Jacqueline Stanzel | 23 – Michael McKie |
| 7 – Greyson Peters | 23 – Micky Nielsen |
| 8 – Kristi Saathoff | 24 – Abigayle Burkholder |
| 8 – Bayler Kahlandt | 24 – Nicholas Stanzel |
| 9 – Matthew McGaughey | 25 – Karen Frost |
| 10 – Wyatt Gotch | 25 – Dylan MacDonald |
| 11 – Jack Floody | 26 – Cheryl Benke |
| 11 – June Olson | 27 – Stan Gitt |
| 11 – Misty Wilson | 28 – Bev Griffin |
| 11 – Nora Wittgren | 29 – Monica Burkholder |
| 14 – Jacob Hackworth | 29 – John Niemoth |
| 14 – Ryan Hackworth | 30 – Brooks Hinrichs |
| 15 – Helen Kirchmann | 30 – Elly Kennec |
| 17 – Julissa Bakken | 30 – Grant Mayer |
| 18 – Colton Feist | 30 – Bill Richards |
| 18 – Hayden Lewis | 30 – Peggy Saathoff |
| 19 – Lonnie Peterson | 31 – Cheryl Marshall |



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ST. MARK'S MESSENGER

SUMMER SCHEDULE

The St. Mark's Messenger (newsletter) summer schedule is as follows:

May

June/July

August

The deadline for articles to be in the church office is April 20 for the May newsletter; May 20 for the *June/July newsletter; and July 20 for the August newsletter.

*Please note that we are going to combine the months of June and July and only send out 1 email for those two months.



As the end of April is here, it is time to begin planning our summers. Along with the planning, it is time for Summer Sundays, our version of a shorter service which features a couple less readings and shorter liturgy. Summer Sundays will begin on Sunday May 26, 2024 and run through Sunday, September 1, 2024.