

The Grapevine

March 2016

St. Mark Lutheran Church + 2109 College St SE + Lacey, WA 98503 + 360-491-2052



"I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." – John 15:5

Pastor's Ponderings

Dear friends at St. Mark,

Thank you for your openness and willingness to experience something a little different this year as we observe the special rites and rituals of the Lenten season on Sunday mornings. The purpose of this year's Lenten experience is to take more time to unpack and reflect upon the deep meaning of these events of Christ's life. They are central to our faith and shape who we are as God's people. We also hoped to reach out to more people – especially to include those who are not able to attend weekday or evening services.

As we journey through life, sometimes it is helpful to look back to remember where we have been, as we also experience where we are now, and consider where we intend to go next. Let's reflect upon our Lenten journey from "Ashes to Easter" so far...

We began our Lenten season with "Ash Sunday" (February 14), remembering that we are created by God and will return to God. We were marked with a cross of ashes on our foreheads. This ritual is not intended to scare us, but to serve as an important reminder that we have our beginnings and endings, and all of life in between, with God. The season of Lent is a time for us to intentionally reflect on who God is and who we are as followers of Christ.

"Lenten Sunday" (February 21) was next. We heard of God's forgiving and reconciling love as we read the parable of the Prodigal Son. We were anointed with oil, reminding us that we are anointed for a ministry in this world – to reach out to others with the healing, forgiving, reconciling love of Jesus Christ. During worship, the laying on of hands and individual prayers of healing were offered for those who desired prayer for themselves or a loved one.

While others are still waiting for it, "Palm Sunday" (February 28) came a little earlier for us at St. Mark and was celebrated with great joy. We gave thanks for Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, even though we know that this journey takes him to the cross. Our worship was punctuated with beautiful palm branches and shouts of "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of Lord!" We rejoiced remembering that, no matter what happens, God is always at work in our world.

(Continued)

“Maundy Sunday” (March 6) was a beautiful service of remembrance. We remembered Jesus and his great love for us. We remembered his command that we love one another. Just as our worship service had no end, neither does our service to others have an end. Before we left worship, we sang the hymn “Beautiful Savior” and stripped the altar, also stripping away the barriers in our own lives that keep us from fully experiencing and living out God’s great love.

“Good Sunday” (March 13) will be a quieter, more reflective service. We hear the betrayal, trial, and death of Christ as recorded in the Gospel of Luke. We extinguish candles after each portion of the Gospel reading and as the light grows dim, we know that God’s love story with the world continues. Even in the face of Christ’s death, we dare, with great faith, to sing the refrain: “Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again!”

“Vigil Sunday” (March 20) is a meaningful service where we will gather together to remember that God is triumphantly faithful. Worship includes a Service of Light where the Christ candle is processed into church and everyone gets to light a candle to remember that Jesus is the light of the world. In the Service of Readings, we hear wonderful stories of God’s mighty acts. In the Service of Baptism, we celebrate the gift of baptism and deepen our commitment to follow Jesus. In the Service of Holy Communion, we feast on the meal and share in the hope Christ gives us as we await the joyous proclamation of Easter.

All the while, as we journey closer to Easter, we also gather on Wednesday evenings at 5:45pm for soup and at 6:30pm for a simple worship service where we pray, “Open My Life, Lord.” We pray that Christ opens our eyes, our hands, our ears, our heart, and our lives with a living faith. During Holy Week (March 23), our Wednesday worship will be a service of Prayer Around the Cross.

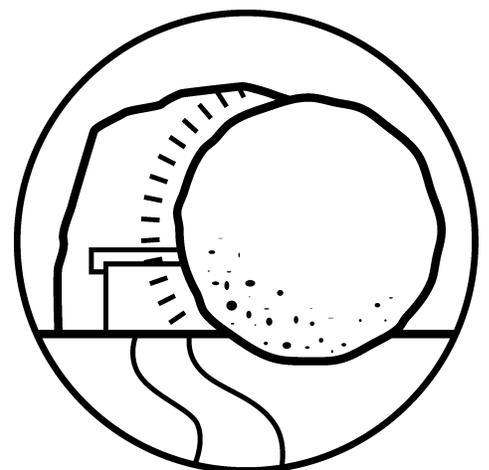
We eagerly await “Easter Sunday,” (March 27) where we celebrate the resurrection of Christ with great joy! We will also share in a tasty potluck brunch! Bring your favorite brunch food.

It is my prayer that this Lenten journey has been, is, and will be meaningful for you. That this time to experience and reflect upon the final earthly journey and resurrection of Christ is a blessing to you.

There is still time to join the journey – there is always time! These next steps along the way are central to our faith and to who we are as God’s people and followers of Christ. See you at church!

A blessed Lenten journey,

+ Pastor Beth



CHURCH COUNCIL NEWS

FINANCIAL UPDATE

MONTH	Income	Expenses	Income Less Expenses	Income	Expenses	Income Less Expenses
January	\$31,583	\$32,959	\$-1,376	\$31,583	\$32,959	\$-1,376
February	\$28,249	\$32,670	\$-4,420	\$59,833	\$65,629	\$-5,796





Remember to turn your clocks **ahead one hour** before you go to bed on Saturday, March 13! Don't want to be late for church!

BRANCHING OUT

A New Ministry: *Branching Out*

Last fall a few of us gathered to discuss how the [Christmas] Giving Tree was going after doing it for so many years. Attending were Michele, Dalene, Trudy, Kelsey, Pastor Beth, and Jan S. (We have since added Margit and Juliana.)

After our initial discussion established that although the Giving Tree might need a little tweaking it was still working very well, we started wondering if it might be time to “branch out” a bit. Were there other community needs we might be able to work on, especially at other times of the year than Christmas?

After a few meetings and much discussion, we decided to focus primarily on being a resource team for Brenda McAfery, Homeless Education Liaison for North Thurston Public Schools. We envision that she will contact us when she learns of needs associated with homeless families and students and we will do what it takes to find solutions. The majority of these needs will be items such as shoes, coats, backpacks, sleeping bags, and blankets.

We are still in the process of working out the details of just HOW we will take care of this, but we do know one thing – we will need YOUR help! Please watch the bulletin for information about the following ways you can help ...

- ❖ Sign up to be called personally to help when a specific need arises
- ❖ Sign up to be on an email list which we will use to make general requests
- ❖ Check out the *Branching Out* bulletin board (in the narthex) and choose a need from one of the branches
- ❖ Bring shoes, socks, or underwear for our first Awareness Drive

More information coming soon!

We are especially thankful to the Thrivent Choice Dollars committee for their substantial donation which gives us a wonderful head start for this project. Through their generosity our first step is to purchase several fast food gift cards to be given to the older unaccompanied youth in the district, providing a warm, safe environment and a hot meal.

We are excited about finding new ways to make a difference in the lives of children and families in our community and look forward to working with all of you to help make this a reality.

– Branching Out Ministry Team

GOD'S WORK. OUR HANDS.

For many of you, we know giving to St. Mark is an important act of faith and a response to God's grace and love in your life. It is through your donations that we are able to carry on God's work here in Lacey and throughout the world.

If you are looking for a convenient way to make recurring contributions, we encourage you to check out these options for giving:

- ❖ Contact your financial institution and request an automatic check be debited from your account and sent to St. Mark. No check writing, no stamps, and no hassle.
- ❖ Visit us online at www.stmarklacey.org and locate the "Online Giving" button. Follow the instructions (if needed, anyone from St. Mark's web team will be happy to assist you).
- ❖ If you are a smartphone user, you can also use this QR code:
(Please be aware there is a 3% charge to St. Mark for each credit card transaction processed.)



No matter how and when you choose to give to St. Mark and its many ministries, we thank you for doing so! **God's work. Our hands.** Thanks be to God!

ST. MARK COMMUNITY GARDEN

St. Mark Community Garden Now Accepting Applications for Garden Plots!



Every year the community garden says good-bye to some gardeners and hello to others. There are plots available to adopt for 2016 in the raised beds and in the central field plots. Each plot comes with automatic drip irrigation and unlimited technical gardening assistance if required, not to mention large doses of fresh air, natural vitamin D, and a chance to chat and share stories with other gardeners.

Whether for yourself, your family, or someone you know in the community, please email Garden Coordinator Gail Frare at gatofrare@comcast.net if you interested in a plot.

CONFIRMATION INFORMATION

Classes continue for our 7th and 8th grade Confirmation students. The second Monday of the month, **March 14**, is a meeting with mentors (adult members of the congregation who are conversation partners). On the fourth Monday of the month, **March 28**, there is no class! (The office is closed for Easter Monday.)

The Rite of Confirmation for our 8th graders will be on **Pentecost Sunday, May 15**.

THERE'S A NEW KID IN OUR FAMILY!

[Jesus said] "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs." – Mark 10:14

We give God thanks that through water and the Holy Spirit we are given new birth, cleansed from sin, and raised to eternal life.

On **March 20 at the 11:00 service**, we will welcome TWO kids to our family: *Allison*, daughter of Sarah and David M., and *Ryan*, son of Jamie and Alejandro O. Thanks be to God!



OTHER NEWS ABOUT MEMBERS

Congratulations to **Zoe** who was awarded the Harstad Scholarship at Pacific Lutheran University! Out of 500 applicants, Zoe was one of 10 students who received this award. Great job, Zoe! Zoe appreciates our thoughts and prayers as she makes important decisions about where she will attend college next year.



Congratulations to **Grace** who was selected as the Cascade Collegiate Conference Softball Player of the Week for February 29 – March 6. Grace is a freshman outfielder/third base at Corban University in Salem, OR. Grace currently leads her team and the conference in home runs and RBIs. If you'd like to see the Warriors in action, they are scheduled to play at Northwest University in Kirkland at 2pm and 4pm on Friday, March 18. Other games can be found by following the links to the softball schedule at www.corbanwarriors.com. If you plan to attend a game, let Eric or Beth know or double-check the schedule in case of any weather-related changes. Way to go, Grace!

EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sundays, 10:00am – Lounge

Leader: Brian

Are the Ten Commandments just a set of rules or are they a way of life? How does each one call us to reflect on our life and values? What does it mean to love God and our neighbor in a world where violence, greed, and fear threaten our lives, our values, our hearts? *The Ten Commandments: Laws of the Heart* by Joan Chittister, is a powerful tool for those who wish to embrace discipleship more fully.

WOMEN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

Sundays, 10:00am – Room #5

Leader: Betty R.

Women of all ages are welcome to join in the study of *Alive and Loose in the Ordinary: Stories of the Incarnation* written by Martha Sterne. A book filled with short essays, this book gives us glimpses of the beauty to be found in the everyday life of a person of faith. It is not necessary to purchase the book in order to attend the class – there are always plenty available.

THE GATHERING

Mondays – Lounge

Leader: Various Women

We have two Women of the ELCA Bible Studies at St. Mark – one during the day and one in the evening. This study group uses the *Gather* study from the WELCA *Gather* Magazine. Consider yourself invited, even if you do not receive the publication.

- ❖ **March 14 – Day** (Second Monday/month) at 11:30am in the lounge (bring your own lunch).
- ❖ **April 4 – Evening** (First Monday/month) at 6:30pm in the lounge.

Dinner: Vicki P.

Study Leader: Earla

TUESDAY PASTOR'S BIBLE STUDY

Tuesdays, 10:00am – Lounge

Leader: Pastor Eric

Join us on **Tuesday, March 15**, for a viewing of *Babette's Feast*. This is a story of two devout and elderly sisters who allow their cook, a French refugee, to prepare a feast in honor of their late father's 100th birthday, despite their spiritual concerns over the sensuality and decadence of French cuisine.

Then, on **Tuesday, March 22**, we will begin a study of Francis J. Moloney's book, *A Body Broken for a Broken People: Eucharist in the New Testament*. Rooted in the broken body and the spilt blood of Jesus himself, the Eucharist has always been the story of a body broken for a broken people. This is the aspect of the central mystery of the Christian life that Maloney will highlight in this study.

AROUND ST. MARK

Keep up on all things St. Mark by visiting: www.stmarklacey.org

MARCH 16 – LENTEN SOUP SUPPER & WORSHIP

5:45 – 6:25pm Soup supper (parish hall)

6:30 – 7:10pm Worship (sanctuary)

(Please sign up if you are able to bring soup, bread, or assist with setup/cleanup. The signup sheet is posted next to the *Flower chart* on the bulletin board in the hallway leading to the parish hall. Thank you!)

MARCH 20 – VIGIL SUNDAY

On this day we will observe a simplified version of the great Easter Vigil service at both 8:30 and 11:00am. Although this service is one of the least commonly celebrated, it is a beautiful celebration of Christ's triumph.

MARCH 23 – LENTEN SOUP SUPPER & WORSHIP

5:45 – 6:25pm Soup supper (parish hall)
6:30 – 7:10pm Worship – Prayer Around the Cross (sanctuary)

(Please sign up if you are able to bring soup, bread, or assist with setup/cleanup. The signup sheet is posted next to the *Flower chart* on the bulletin board in the hallway leading to the parish hall. Thank you!)

MARCH 27 – EASTER SUNDAY

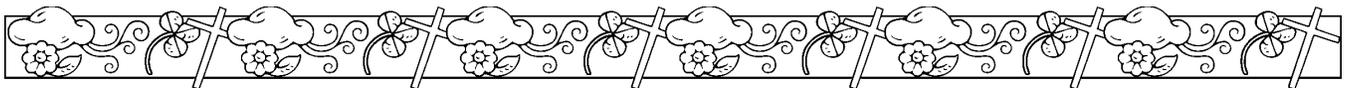
HE IS RISEN! Join us as we celebrate the blessing of the resurrection! Services are at **8:30 and 11:00**. You are invited to bring fresh flowers to be used to fill the Cross of Flowers.

MARCH 27 – EASTER BREAKFAST

YUM!!! This year, our Easter Breakfast is a potluck! Bring your favorite brunch food to share. Breakfast will be between our 8:30 and 11:00am services. Help will be needed for set up and clean up; a signup sheet is posted on the bulletin board in the hallway leading to the parish hall.

MARCH 28 – CRAFT NIGHT

St. Mark crafters meet on the last Monday of each month (except November and December) for an evening of dinner (provided), everything craft-y, and lots of laughter. Why *wouldn't* you want to join them?!? Hope to see you on **Monday, March 28 at 6:00pm** in the parish hall.



APRIL 3 – PLU SUNDAY

We are blessed to have a Lutheran University in our synod! **Sunday, April 3** is PLU Sunday! You are welcome to wear your PLU garb or black and gold to celebrate the educational ministry of PLU.

APRIL 6 – SENIORS TOGETHER

During the March “Seniors Together” gathering, we learned much about senior safety and scams thanks to Officer Jesse Hadley of the Lacey Police Department. April’s program is still being planned, but as always, it will be fun! Join us **April 6 at 10:00am** in the parish hall. Bring treats to share if you can.

APRIL 10 – NEW MEMBERS

We are thrilled to receive new members on **Sunday, April 10!** If you are interested in making St. Mark your church home, please speak with Pastors Beth or Eric.

APRIL 17 – GARDEN BLESSING

Sunday, April 17, we will celebrate “Care for the Earth” Sunday, complete with a fun blessing in between services for our St. Mark Community Garden! Join us for this festive experience.

APRIL 24 – ENDOWMENT SUNDAY

Endowment Sunday is **April 24**. We give thanks for everyone who has contributed and helps manage our St. Mark Endowment Fund. Each year, our Endowment Committee offers grants to eligible organizations. The Endowment Grants will be awarded at the beginning of each worship service.



FOOD BANK SUNDAY

St. Mark sets aside the **first Sunday of each month** to acknowledge gifts to the Thurston County Food Bank. Please place your non-perishable food gifts on the cart just inside the parish hall doors. Money gifts can be given through St. Mark – just note “Food Bank” on the memo line.

LIVING STONES PRISON MINISTRY

Living Stones has a quarterly newsletter. If you would like to be added to their mailing list, let the church office know and we will share your email address. This is a great way to keep in touch with what is happening in this prison ministry. Check out their latest newsletter at www.livingstonesprisoncongregation.com and “like” them on Facebook at Living Stones Ministries, Southwest Washington.

ENDOWMENT FUND NEWS

In the January issue of *The Grapevine*, the Endowment Committee discussed the requirements that organizations had to meet to be eligible for consideration of a grant from the Endowment Committee. In this issue, we will address how the grant amount is determined and divided among the various grant applicants.

On the close of business on December 31, the sum of all funds of the Endowment Fund is determined. According to the *Governing Rules of the Endowment Fund*, the Fund shall distribute not less than 4% or more than 6% of the value of the fund on December 31. According to the operating rules of the fund, “one-third shall be distributed to support local agencies, institutions, and charities; one-third shall be distributed to international charitable endeavors; and, one-third shall be distributed for special maintenance and/or capital projects at St. Mark Lutheran Church.”

Members of the congregation are invited to make planned gifts to the Endowment Fund which may include, “bequests in wills, assignment of life insurance, assignment of IRAs and other retirement plans, charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, assignment of certificates of deposit, transfer of property such as cash, stocks, bonds, and real estate.”

If you have questions about the Endowment Fund, please direct them to the Endowment Committee. Members are: Milt, Bob B., Dan B., Juliana, and David S.

– Bob B.

PRAYING HANDS MINISTRY

St. Mark's Praying Hands Ministry ministers through the gift of knitted or crocheted prayer shawls to people in need of comfort, strength, peace, patience, and so much more. The shawl gives a tangible example of God's love and care as the recipient wraps up in the soft fibers of the yarn – feeling God's arms around him or her. A prayer shawl is made with prayer; the maker of the shawl prays before, during, and after they work on the shawl.

The Praying Hands Ministry is intended to be a community ministry, one that reaches outside the walls of St. Mark. If you know someone who might benefit from a prayer shawl or if you would like to be part of this ministry team, please contact the church office.

WOMEN OF THE ELCA

Looking for opportunities to meet with other Christian women to celebrate and regenerate? An informative *SWATCH* newsletter is posted on the bulletin board in the hallway, or you can visit www.womenoftheelca.org, or Facebook (SW WA Women of the ELCA) for more information.

Upcoming events include:

- ❖ *Global Stories* – April 23 – The Lutheran Church of The Good Shepherd, Olympia
- ❖ *Spring Retreat* – May 13-15 – Dumas Bay Centre, Federal Way
- ❖ *Region I Gathering Women "Empowering Women"* – June 24-26 – Embassy Suites, Lynwood

CHURCH DIRECTORY UPDATES

If you have changed your phone number, email address, mailing address, etc., or would like to be included in our church directory, please contact the office.

SAFI SCHOOL PROJECT

NATIONAL EXAM RESULTS FOR 2015 FORM IV GRADUATES – FINALLY!

Safi School Project sponsors DO change lives!

The results are in and the scores show that everyone's efforts are creating positive results. Ngateu Secondary School students continue to score in the top results of national exams. GREAT SCORES, EVERYONE IS VERY HAPPY and SO, SO VERY PROUD.



Congratulations to the students: 63% got Division II and III. Division II – 7 students; Division III – 15 students; 15 students passed math (a 43% passage is a real accomplishment). We jump for joy!

Considering that prior to Safi support Ngateu had no one graduating, this is a stunning attestation that hard work and a little help really makes a difference. Thank you for all your prayers and support. Please see more at our website www.safischoolproject.org.

– Kristina

EVERYDAY GRACE

DOWN FROM THE CROSS

Persecuted by the people, judged unfairly by the authorities and forced to die against His will, Jesus was led to that rugged cross. How He longed for a different outcome, “My God, why have you forsaken me?” Even in His pain and suffering, He still felt compassion for those who condemned Him, “Father, Forgive them for they know not what they do.” For hours He suffered on that cross. Then it was over, “Today I will be with you in paradise.”

What have we learned from that horrible suffering and death? We now know that Jesus did indeed suffer and die for us. What He did has been a daily reminder to us that through His death and resurrection we do not have to make a journey such as His. He came down from that cross so that we would have forgiveness of our sins and be saved by His redeeming grace.

– Ken L.

OUT AND ABOUT

THE OLYMPIA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA PRESENTS ...

The Lowlands & Highlands, **March 13 at 7:00pm** at the Washington Center for the Performing Arts. Featuring Huw Edwards, Conductor and Music Director and Ellen Cockerham, Violin. For tickets (starting at \$10) visit www.olytix.org, or contact the symphony office at 360-753-0074.

OLYMPIA CHORAL SOCIETY PRESENTS ...

Crazy for Gershwin – Porter and Berlin. Directed by Terrance Robert Bernard Shaw, participants in the Olympia Choral Society include St. Mark members Pastor Eric, David E., and Jim S. Concerts dates are:

Friday, **April 1** – 7:30pm

Saturday, **April 2** – 7:30pm

Sunday, **April 3** – 2:30pm

Performances are held at Koval Center for the Performing Arts, 600 Sleater Kinney Road NE in Lacey. Admission is FREE, however, donations are gladly accepted and used to benefit local charities and organizations.

FOR THIS WE GIVE THANKS!

Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: ourselves, our time, and our possessions.

From others:

Global Health Ministries– www.ghm.org

Thurston County Food Bank – www.thurstoncountyfoodbank.org

Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary – www.PTLS.edu

Living Stones Prison Congregation – www.livingstonesprisoncongregation.com

Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

St. Mark Lutheran Church

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Terry Shaw, Music Director

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Leah Wilson, Handbell Director

Lwilson372@aol.com – 360-491-2052

Rae Corbin, Accompanist

Michele Neely, Childcare Attendant

Vance Cochran, Custodian