

# St. Mark's Lutheran Church

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## Prayer Ministry

You are invited to participate in a new prayer ministry. We meet on Thursdays at 5:30 p.m. in St. Mark's sanctuary. If you are unable to attend and have a prayer request you would like lifted, please contact the church office or feel free to place your written request in the prayer box located in narthex.

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Council has adopted a new policy for anyone that wishes to use the fellowship hall for an event. All requests are to be sent to Lisa Bartholomew. She can be reached at 231-9494. She will handle all the arrangements, scheduling, paperwork and payments. This will allow for a one point person contact rather than having too many people involved.

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## Mark your calendars

**February 4 - Annual congregational meeting after worship service. Please bring a dish to pass.**

## Prayers Concerns

Please lift the following people up in prayer:

Prayers for our new pastor  
Coltrain family  
Ron  
Freya  
Mrs. Kerber  
Amanda

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## Upcoming Events

**Feb 4 - Annual meeting**

**Feb 10 - Men's prayer breakfast**

**Feb 12 - Council meeting 7:00**

**Feb 28- NET dinner @ St. Marks**

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## Council Members:

**President - Marie Whittaker  
Vice President - Chris Cash  
Secretary - Lori Roney  
Treasurer - Debbie Palmatier  
Members - Jim Brigadier  
Dennis Foland and Lisa Bartholomew.**

# St. Mark's Lutheran Church

## Happy Days !!!!!

### **Birthdays: February**

February 3 - Harry Amendola and

Dee Harrison

February 6 - Logan Bartholomew

February 23 - Bill Morton

February 24 - Kaleb Minton

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It is better to walk alone, than  
with a crowd going in the wrong  
direction.

Never lose hope. You never  
know what tomorrow may bring.

You cannot hang out with  
negative people and expect to  
live a positive life.

Be someone that makes you  
happy.

One of the hardest decisions  
you'll ever face in life is choosing  
whether to walk away or try  
harder.

Always remember your present  
situation is not your final  
destination. The best is yet to  
come.

**Did you know St. Mark's offers  
the following opportunities for  
you and your family to  
participate?**

Phoebes - every Monday from 9-2 PM

Youth Sunday School - Held during  
the worship service message

Adult Sunday School - Sundays from  
9:15 - 10 AM

Prayer Ministry - every Thursday  
night beginning at 5:30 PM

Men's Prayer breakfast - second  
Saturday of each month

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**Our mitten tree is in the  
sanctuary. We are asking for  
donations of mittens  
and socks this year.**



## Love is in the Care

Ah February, the month when we will see the symbol of hearts everywhere signifying 'love is in the air'. The heart symbol has become synonymous with love....I ♥ this, or I ♥ that. The this or that can be objects, places, or people as it is often used on Valentine's Day. Valentine's Day, a holiday based on love, where the giving of cards, flowers, candy, and/or a romantic dinner have become the tradition.

From my early years in elementary school when we exchanged cards with fellow classmates, to adult years when they were reserved for that someone special, I remember the request most often found in the writings....'will you be my valentine?'

I always had my interpretation of what that meant, especially with all of the ♥ symbols attached. The reality is that the holiday is named for someone who was martyred because of faith and defiance of the law at the time. The actual history of St. Valentine is uncertain. The only verified facts are that he lived during the third century when Claudius II was Roman emperor. There are a number of legends, which are given for St. Valentine's execution by the emperor, components of which are recorded as true during this time period in history. It is said that St. Valentine was a man with a tender heart that aided Christians who were undergoing martyrdom even though he himself was not a Christian. Another legend is that he was a priest in the temple who defied Emperor Claudius' order that young people were forbidden to marry. This order is documented that the emperor felt married men did not fight as hard as single men in his armies. A third legend was that St. Valentine became a Christian during his ministry to the persecuted Christians, refused to sacrifice to pagan gods, and was then imprisoned himself. Like the Apostle, St. Paul, St. Valentine gave testimony while in prison which had an affect on the jailer and his family.

Whether they are considered legend or historical they are all feasible and resulted in St. Valentine being tortured, beaten, and beheaded because of his actions fueled by his faith.

*John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.*

*1 John 4:8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

It has been said that 'Jesus died for sinners, St. Valentine died for lovers'.

Let us remember the true meaning of love as defined by St. Paul from *1 Corinthians 13:4-7*, *Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.*

As we celebrate Valentine's Day and connect with others for romance or friendship, let us remember St. Valentine. On the day of his execution a note was found that St. Valentine left for the jailer's daughter whom he had prayed for and was miraculously healed from an infirmity, it was signed...'Your Valentine'. His life and death a testimony of his faith. Lord, we give thanks for the freedoms and privileges we have. We pray that we never forget those who have been and are still martyred for their faith. May our lives be blessed with such faith, as to have the Agape love described by St. Paul, so we can pledge to you and our neighbors...we are your valentine.

In God We Trust / ♥ and Prayers, Pastor Dave



# St. Mark's Lutheran Church

## Committees:

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**If you know of anyone that  
could use an  
encouragement basket  
please speak with Janet or  
Gloria.**

## Servers for Feb

### February 4:

Acolyte - Lisa  
Ushers - Dennis/Diane  
Reader - Sharon  
Greeter - Debbie  
Prayer - Chris  
Counter - Carrie

### February 11:

Acolyte - Dylan  
Ushers - Bonnie/Bill  
Reader - Ginny  
Greeter - Maurice  
Prayer - Georgia  
Counter - Deb

### February 18:

Acolyte - Lisa  
Ushers - Maurice/Ginny  
Reader - Nannette  
Greeter - Pat  
Prayer - Beth  
Counter - Diane

### Feb 25:

Acolyte - Dylan  
Ushers - Chris/Gene  
Reader - Ted  
Greeter - Janet  
Prayer - Ted  
Counter - Carrie

# St. Mark's Lutheran Church

326 Main Street  
Middleburgh, NY



## **ROAST PORK DINNER**

**Saturday, February 10, 2018**

**4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.**

**Adult - \$10.00**

**Children – Age 5 to 12 - \$6.00**

**Age 4 and younger - Free**

**Benefit – Driveway Repair Project**



# GAME NIGHT

PLEASE JOIN US FOR OUR 1<sup>ST</sup>  
CHURCH-FAMILY-COMMUNITY GAME NIGHT!

BRING A FAVORITE BOARD GAME, DECK OF CARDS OR  
JUST YOURSELF TO SHARE IN AN EVENING  
OF FUN TOGETHER.

GET TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOR WHILE  
LEARNING A NEW GAME.



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16TH  
6:30 PM  
MIDDLEBURGH REFORMED  
CHURCH  
178 RIVER STREET,  
MIDDLEBURGH

PLEASE BRING A DESSERT  
OR SNACK TO SHARE.  
COFFEE/TEA AND JUICE  
WILL BE PROVIDED.

CONTACT PERSON: ALLISON COONS

"FOR WHERE THERE ARE TWO OR THREE GATHERED  
TOGETHER IN MY NAME,  
THERE AM I IN THE MIDST OF THEM."  
MATTHEW 18:20



# Empty Bowls Schoharie County

*Help end hunger in our community!*

## 7th Annual Luncheon

Sunday, April 8th 2018

11 am - 3 pm

Cobleskill-Richmondville High School



Buy a bowl (\$8 and up), choose your soup and bread and enjoy lunch while raising money for an important local cause.

There will also be an auction, live music, ice cream sundaes, soup-to-go, and children's activities!

**All proceeds are donated to Schoharie County food pantries!**

### For more information:

call (518) 296-8122 • email [emptybowlsschoharie@gmail.com](mailto:emptybowlsschoharie@gmail.com)  
visit [www.emptybowlsschoharie.org](http://www.emptybowlsschoharie.org)  
and like Empty Bowls Schoharie County on Facebook!

Your School District has been asked to distribute this flyer in an effort to make the community aware of this event. The District is not promoting or sponsoring this activity.

Paint and donate a bowl for



(save the date - Empty Bowls Luncheon is April 8, 2018  
11 am - 3 pm, C-R High School Rt. 7, Richmondville)

**\$9 to paint and donate your bowl**  
**Last day to paint: March 11**

**Paint at the Studio for Art and Craft**  
**576 Main St Cobleskill NY 518-823-4053**

or

**Request a Bowls to Go Kit for your business**  
**or club to paint at your location**

**Have a way to make your own bowls? Bring them to the Studio by March 31 to donate.**



All proceeds from the luncheon go to Schoharie County food pantries.

For more information call (518) 296-8122  
and like Empty Bowls Schoharie County on Facebook

Hosted by the Cobleskill Rotary Club



I dreamt that I went to Heaven and an angel was showing me around. We walked side-by-side inside a large workroom filled with angels. My angel guide stopped in front of the first section and said, "This is the Receiving Section. Here, all petitions to God said in prayer are received."

I looked around in this area, and it was terribly busy with so many angels sorting out petitions written on voluminous paper sheets and scraps from people all over the world.

Then we moved on down a long corridor until we reached the second section.

The angel then said to me, "This is the Packaging and Delivery Section. Here, the graces and blessings the people asked for are processed and delivered to the living persons who asked for them." I noticed again how busy it was there. There were many angels working hard at that station, since so many blessings had been requested and were being packaged for delivery to Earth.

Finally, at the farthest end of the long corridor we stopped at the door of a very small station. To my great surprise, only one angel was seated there, idly doing nothing. "This is the Acknowledgment Section," my angel friend quietly admitted to me. He seemed embarrassed.



"How is it that there is no work going on here?" I asked.

"So sad," the angel sighed. "After people receive the blessings that they asked for, very few send back acknowledgments."

"How does one acknowledge God's blessings?" I asked.

"Simple," the angel answered. Just say, "Thank you, Lord."

"What blessings should they acknowledge?" I asked.

"If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of this world. If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy, and if you get this on your own computer, you are part of the 1% in the world who has that opportunity."

"If you woke up this morning with more health than illness.... you are more blessed than the many who will not even survive this day."

"If you have never experienced the fear in battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony

of torture, or the pangs of starvation....you are ahead of 700 million people in the world."

"If you can attend a church without the fear of harassment, arrest, torture or death you are envied by, and more blessed than, three billion people in the world."

"If you can hold your head up and smile, you are not the norm, you're unique to all those in doubt and despair....."

"Ok," I said. "What now? How can I start?"

The Angel said, "If you can read this message, you just received a double blessing in that someone was thinking of you as very special and you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world who cannot read at all."

Have a good day, count your blessings, and if you care to, pass this along to remind everyone else how blessed we all are.....

**ATTN: Acknowledge Department**

"Thank you Lord, for giving me the ability to share this message and for giving me so many wonderful people with whom to share it."



# Epiphany – Image vs. Identity

Dear Disciples of Christ Jesus,

The season of Epiphany marks one of the most critical seasons for teaching the faith. Our readings are focused on proclaiming Jesus' identity. Knowing who Jesus is is essential for beginning the journey of following him. The lectionary Scripture readings during this season provide us with true insight into what "The Light" exposes.

The word *Epiphany* literally means to make manifest. Following the Christmas season that proclaims Jesus' birth and his presence, the Church proclaims who Jesus is.

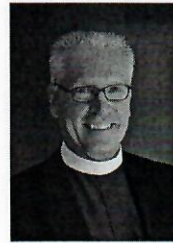
The wise men proclaim him a king. In fact, Jesus is the King of Kings, Lord of all creation.

John the Baptist announces Jesus as the Messiah. In his baptism, the Holy Spirit reveals Jesus to be the Son of God.

Jesus calls his disciples to follow Him. As they follow him, the disciples experience the power of his Kingdom that broke into our world through him.

In these texts, Jesus heals the sick and casts out demons. The disciples experience the power of Jesus' mercy, compassion and love opposing the spiritual forces that wound, corrupt and destroy people. His power is greater than all the evil in the world combined.

In our texts, we also see the human side of Jesus. He is exhausted at times and gets away to be alone and pray. He is clear about his mission and theirs — to proclaim the Good News of his Kingdom to neighboring towns, throughout all of Galilee and Israel and to the ends of the earth. Jesus leads his followers to move forward, not to stay where it is safe and easy, but to move to places where people are hurting and in need, where they have not yet heard or believed in Jesus. Matthew quotes the great words of the prophet Isaiah: "the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow, a light has shined" (*Matthew 4:16 NLT*).



## *From the Bishop*

**Bishop John Bradosky**

This light also exposes the risk of following Jesus. John the Baptist is arrested and executed. Plans are interrupted and Jesus moves from place to place to avoid those forces that seek to destroy him or subvert his mission.

The season of Epiphany is about the Light that overcomes the darkness of life. It overcomes the darkness, but it does not take away the risk.

If Jesus' plans were interrupted because of the darkness in this world, should we expect anything less in the lives of those who follow him?

What I have experienced in ministry over the years is that plans are often interrupted. We can waste much of our life filled with regret and disappointment. What I have also learned is that there is nothing in my life that is off limits to him and that, when he disrupts my plans, he may be trying to accomplish his plans that are far better. They are far more fulfilling plans in which he calls us to overcome our self-absorption by being absorbed into his life.

Jesus has a way of interrupting our lives when he wants more for us and for his Church. That is precisely what he did with those first disciples. He interrupted their plans with a far better plan. Whether they were cleaning their nets or bringing in revenue for Rome at the tax office, Jesus interrupted their lives with an invitation, "Come and follow me." When the Gospel is rightly proclaimed today, people will hear the same invitation from Jesus. They will also be forced to wrestle with all that it means to respond obediently, to take that first step away from our self-absorbed life to life in him.

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Sometimes our persistent sinful nature causes us to hold onto those things that are unhealthy for us even when we know there is hope in a different direction. We would rather maintain the familiar condition and disease than pursue the changes necessary for greater health and wholeness of life.

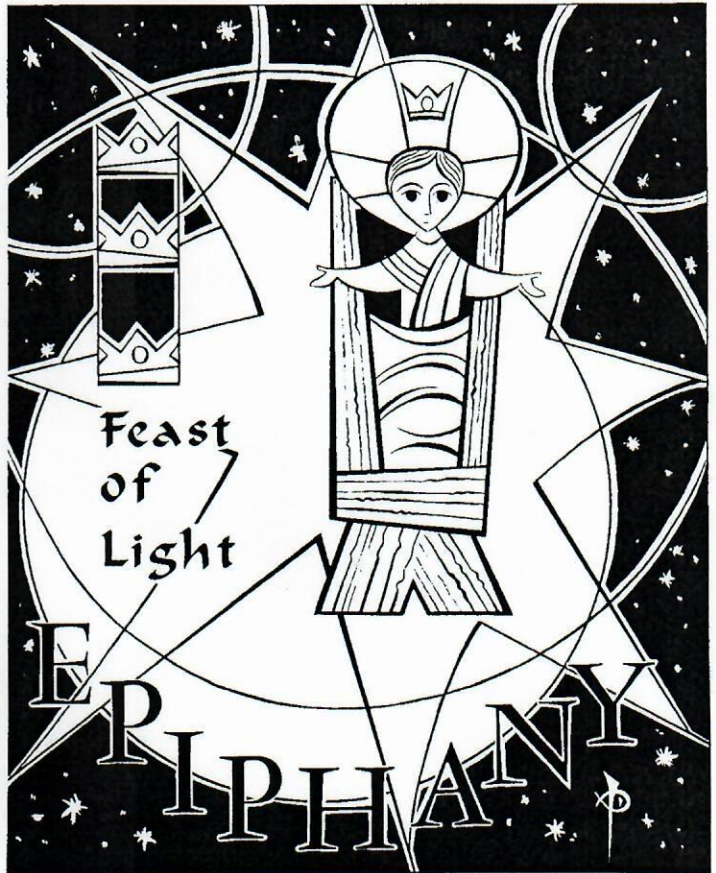
In my own life, I have found that Jesus only asks me to give up the things that control me, that are harmful to me, that keep me from holding onto him.

Making decisions about the future is never easy. No matter what decision we make, it exacts a toll from us no matter how glamorous or lucrative the world makes it seem. The light of Epiphany makes it clear that we can expect no less when we are following Jesus. We are all spending our lives for some cause. The question is for what cause are we giving it away? For ourselves or for Jesus and his mission.

One of the greatest tragedies facing churches today is that we have worked so hard to make the Christian faith anything but challenging. We have labored hard so that people will say yes to easy faith, low commitment, membership that grants us multiple rights and privileges, to an organization that can easily become a self-indulgent institution, bent on self-preservation even if it means compromising the faith for the sake of proclaiming a gospel of its own invention, that is really no gospel at all.

In spite of those misguided efforts, I am convinced that people today are looking for real Christianity. They want to be challenged. They want to hear the call of Jesus to become his disciples, and they want to know how to begin the journey. People are hungry and thirsty for Jesus. They are searching for direction, meaning, purpose, worth, value. They want what only the Kingdom Jesus proclaims can provide — life and community in him, through his body, the Church. When people experience life in Jesus, they are no longer focused on what changed or what they gave up, as it is meaningless and insignificant in comparison to what they now possess, new life in Christ.

The revealing light of Epiphany shines like a laser. It is a powerful but very narrow beam of light that proclaims Jesus as Messiah, Savior, Lamb of God,



the One who opens the Kingdom of Heaven to all who believe in him.

The revelation to the Magi, the declaration at his baptism, his rejection of evil, the obedience of his disciples, the authority and insight of his teaching, the power of his miracles and the mystery of his transfiguration all reveal the truth of his identity.

The faith we live, proclaim and share with others is not about mere information. It is about a truth that is so compelling and so powerful that it not only reveals Jesus but transforms us. He reveals who he is so that we might receive our true identity through him.

During this season of Epiphany, I am always reminded of the difference between image and identity. It is impossible to exist in this culture and not be concerned with our image. We are constantly bombarded by media that heightens our sensitivity about how others will perceive us. How we appear, the clothes we wear, the food we eat, the car we drive, our home, our furniture, the

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technology we use, the people we know, our social circles — all focus our lives on our image.

We can become so preoccupied with image that we have no time or energy to focus on the far deeper, far more critical issue of our identity. I don't know about you, but, when it comes to making difficult decisions, I have asked, what will other people think? Sometimes I have tried to dodge a decision Jesus is calling me to make by asking what will please the greatest number of people. That sounds caring on the outside but it doesn't go very deep!

The world keeps telling us the task of life is to create our own unique sense of self, to make a name for ourselves, to create a reputation for ourselves, to become self-fulfilled. That path leads only to following our self — self-centeredness and selfishness that are not only unhealthy but destructive eternally.

Discipleship is not about image. It is all about identity. Our identity is in Christ. It is not in man-made institutions or organizations no matter how well intended. In Baptism, we take on the identity of Christ as we accept the name "Christian." The sign of the cross marks us forever. This is the beginning of defining who we are. We learn from Jesus who he is and, in him, we find out who we are — children of the heavenly Father, citizens of the Kingdom of God, followers of Jesus. As Paul reminds us, in him (Jesus) we live and move and have our being! We are called and claimed by the infinite One who gave his life for us, who proclaims our infinite worth and value by his death and resurrection for us!

Jesus did not give his disciples a doctrine. He did not give them a theology. He did not give them a building, constitution, structure, institution, and not even a methodology for success. He gave them only one thing. He gave them himself with a gentle call, "Come and follow me!"

Brothers and sisters, that is all we have, but it is all we need, for it is everything! It is all we are, and it is more than anything else we could hope to be, followers of Jesus. Please don't misunderstand. I am not saying that those worldly things are unimportant, but they are not the most important thing for the body of Christ. He is.

The oneness Jesus prays for his disciples to experience in the 17th chapter of John is not an organizational unity or a matter of institutional loyalty, but the oneness of identity, "that they may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you." The identity of Jesus is in the Father. The identity of the Father is in Jesus. Jesus is praying that his identity will be in us and that our identity will be in him. That is his promise and our only hope.

In this season of Epiphany, focused on Jesus' identity, we discover again our own identity in him as his followers and as a community of his disciples. The light of Epiphany shines on Jesus, his mission and all the risks associated with it, clearly symbolized in the cross.

It is my prayer during this revealing season that we manifest our identity in Christ Jesus, emboldened for his mission fully aware of all the risks associated with following him in this world.

With his identity rooted in "Christ Alone," Luther would write, "With the zeal of a missionary, I dedicated the rest of my life to telling others the good news of salvation by grace through faith. For now, I knew that I stood before God with Christ's righteousness and with Christ's courage."

May we do the same. Forget the image and gain the identity in Christ, focusing on substance rather than the surface of real life in him.

Have a blessed Epiphany season!

It is good to be with you following him.

Bishop John Bradosky

## **Mark Ryman accepts call to Sola Publishing**

Pastor Mark Ryman has accepted a call to serve as Online Resource Editor for Sola Publishing.

Pastor Ryman finished his work as NALC Communications Coordinator on Jan. 1. Among his significant projects were overseeing a redesign of the NALC's website and coordinating daily online devotions.