

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

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Upcoming Events

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.

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.

Thank you to all who either made a pie (or 2 or more) and even turned around and bought a pie or 2 or donated money for our annual pie sale. We were truly blessed by God with wonderful weather and a successful day. We made over \$700 on the pies. Our God is an awesome God!

Prayers Concerns

Please lift the following people up in prayer:

Prayers for our new pastor
Julie M.
Julie B.
Carol
Jackson
Miller family
Michael

Upcoming Events

Aug 12 - Men's prayer breakfast

Aug 14 - Council meeting 7:00

Happy Days !!!!!

Birthdays: August

Aug 8 - John Warner III
Aug 9 - Vanessa Gordon
Aug 19 - Jeremy Gordon
Aug 22 - Dennis Foland and
Georgia Van Dyke
Aug 23 - Kelsey Roney

Anniversaries: August

Aug 22 - Cheryl and Virgil Cater
Dennis and Diane France
Lori and Dean Roney

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

New website

Our webpage is up and running.
Check it out. The address is

[www.stmarkslutheran
middleburgh.com](http://www.stmarkslutheranmiddleburgh.com)

Servers for Aug

August 6:

Acolyte - Dylan
Ushers - Tom/Sharon
Reader - Ginny
Greeter - Harry
Prayer - Chris
Counter - Debbie

August 13:

Acolyte - Lisa
Ushers - Gene/Chris
Reader - Nannette
Greeter - Pat
Prayer - Georgia
Counter - Diane

August 20:

Acolyte - Lisa
Ushers - Dean/Lori
Reader - Ted
Greeter - Janet
Prayer - Ted
Counter - Carrie

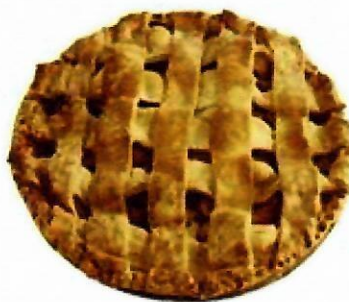
August 27:

Acolyte - Dylan
Ushers - Dennis/Diane
Reader - Deb B.
Greeter - Deb P.
Prayer - Ginny
Counter - Debbie

THANK YOU!!!



We serve One God, but we fed many! On the morning of July 22, the kitchen had the sweet aroma of delicious food being cooked....food like pancakes, eggs, sausage just to name a few. It was truly a blessing to be the hands of Jesus as we served what He so graciously provided for us. The donations we received will benefit our Driveway Repair Fund. Praises to our Lord!



Once again the Phoebe pie and craft sale was a success. We are very grateful for your support as this is the only fundraiser we have where the proceeds are used to support our ministry of making quilts and encouragement baskets. Whether you baked a pie(s) or made a monetary donation, it is sincerely appreciated. May God bless you for your generosity.



"The hills are alive with the sound of music"

Yes...the hills around Middleburgh and on the lawn of the Middleburgh High School were alive with the sound of music on Sunday, July 23, as Kim and Reggie Harris led the Community Worship Service in songs of praise. Those attending the service were truly blessed as they sang an up-tempo version of the hymn "I'll Fly Away", followed by "Amazing Grace".

All of the local clergy participated in the worship service with Pastor Mel delivering the morning message. A special thank you to Friar Peter, Sister Anna, Father Matt, Pastor Jeff, Pastor Dave and Pastor Mel for their faithful service. In addition, a special thank you to Cheryl Cater for her tireless work in preparing the bulletin and working behind the scenes.

The annual Community Worship Service is a dream of Pastor Carol Coltrain, one of God's faithful servants. Unfortunately, Pastor Carol is currently recovering from surgery so was unable to participate this year. The clergy led the congregation in a special prayer for God's healing touch to be upon her.

Another Community Worship Service will be held next year. Please keep it in mind when you start making your plans for 2018; you too can have an opportunity to be greatly blessed as the community gathers to worship together.

They're Back! Those wonderful Church Bulletins! Thank God for the church ladies with typewriters. These sentences actually appeared in church bulletins or were announced at church services:

The Fasting & Prayer Conference includes meals.

Scouts are saving aluminum cans, bottles and other items to be recycled
Proceeds will be used to cripple children.

The sermon this morning: Jesus Walks on the Water. The sermon tonight:
'Searching for Jesus.'

Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Bring your husbands.

Don't let worry kill you off - let the Church help.

Miss Charlene Mason sang 'I will not pass this way again,' giving obvious pleasure to the congregation.

For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.

Next Thursday there will be try-outs for the choir. They need all the help they can get.

Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on October 24 in the church.
So ends a friendship that began in their school days.

A bean supper will be held on Tuesday evening in the church hall. Music will follow.

Is your congregation stagnant and in decline?

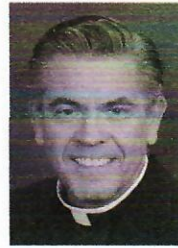
Welcome to Life-to-Life Discipleship - Jesus' intention for renewal and re-formation

This life is not righteousness, but growth in righteousness; not health, but healing, not being but becoming; not rest, but exercise; we are not yet what we will be, but we are growing toward it; the process is not yet finished, but it is going on; this is not the end but it is the road; all does not gleam with glory, but all is being purified. — "An Argument in Defense of All the Articles of Dr. Martin Luther Wrongly Condemned," Martin Luther, 1521

In conversations with NALC congregations, councils and call committees, it is obvious that one of their greatest challenges is stagnation and decline. It is common for call committees to be looking for their next pastor to be one who has just the right new idea or program "solution" to their situation so that the new pastor will lead them into a golden era of growth, financial stability and excitement. Often this is fueled by the expressed need to have more members to relieve the burden of current burned-out members, share the responsibility for upkeep and maintenance of the church institution, and provide increased income to pay the bills and keep the doors open!

While we realize the challenges congregations are facing today, expecting that a pastor — "new" or "old" — will be able to provide some silver bullet to stop the decline and end the stagnation is misguided and places unrealistic expectations upon pastors, as well as congregational leaders. I shudder when I hear that call committees are interviewing potential pastors with an eye toward finding a "savior" who will "help us get new members to turn things around."

Don't misunderstand. We share the goal of proclaiming the Gospel, reaching the unchurched, and having congregations that are growing in faith and numbers. But having this as a goal to relieve burdened and tapped-out current members, or wanting new members to simply help support the church as a viable social organization misses the



Ministry Matters

Pastor David Wendel

Assistant to the Bishop
for Ministry and Ecumenism

reason for the existence of the Body of Christ in the first place, and dooms the struggling congregation to frustration, further burnout and continuing decline.

What is tragic about this reality is that the NALC is addressing congregational and pastoral decline and burnout — but most of our congregations and pastors have no clue what we are about! Many of our congregations and pastors have not heard of NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship!

Have you heard, for example, that we have an NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship Leadership Team? Have you checked out the NALC website and the video and resources related to discipleship and disciple-making? Do you have any idea what we mean in the NALC when we say, "Life-to-Life Discipleship?"

One of the questions in the NALC *Congregational Workshop in Preparation for the Call Process* asks: "The NALC is committed to moving away from an institutional understanding of the Church, to the biblical commission to be a community of followers of Jesus who focus on being disciples and making disciples. Which best describes your understanding of this movement? *Totally unaware. Have heard about it. Have been involved personally. Some in the congregation are involved, some aren't. Congregation understands, is on-board and involved.*"

Most congregations answer, "Totally unaware."

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In the recent meeting of the NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship Leadership team, we discussed the need to inform all of our pastors and congregations about Life-to-Life Discipleship. We discussed the need to have enough NALC congregations and pastors involved so that we get to the “tipping point” where involvement increases organically with the goal that ultimately, all have the opportunity to be involved.

Why is it important that congregations and pastors be involved?

At its core, Life-to-Life Discipleship is about movement! The Christian life is not about stagnation and it's certainly not about decline!

Martin Luther talks about this in the quote above, where he says the Christian life is not about “being, but becoming; we are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it ...” Baptism is not about having arrived at the Christ-like life — it is about beginning the life shaped and formed in Christ, which is completed when we are raised to new life in him after death.

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is about movement. A pastor who is exhausted, frustrated and feeling trapped will not be able to lead the flock forward in faith. A congregation that is burned out and “stuck” will not grow in faith or numbers, having fallen into a mindset of simply wanting to maintain the church as institution, service organization, or social club existing for the fellowship and fun of its current members.

What is Life-to-Life Discipleship? First, it is taking our “marching orders” from our Lord in his Great Commission, when he commands, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded” (*Matthew 28:19-20*). Because we are committed to being disciples and making disciples, we look to Jesus to see what disciple-making is all about — and we see that it is about investing in others, life to life — person to person.

Life-to-Life Discipleship is “incarnational.” God became human, took on flesh and blood, in His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to dwell among us full of grace and truth (*John 1:14*). Jesus promised to be with us where two or three are gathered in His name (*Matthew 18:20*). As our Lord is extending the Great Commission, he promises, “And lo, I am with you always.” Jesus comes to us today through the means of grace — Word and Sacrament — to be truly present. As Christ is with us, we seek to be with others. Life-to-Life Discipleship, then, is about pastors investing in other pastors, pastors investing in individuals in their congregations, individual disciples in the congregation investing in the lives of others, whether in the congregation, in their home or family, in their neighborhood, friendships or acquaintances.

As our Lord gave himself for our sake, we give ourselves for others. As Jesus is with us always, emptying himself to walk alongside us through life, we respond by walking alongside others. This is Life-to-Life Discipleship and disciple-making. It's about loving others as Christ loves us, caring for others so that we do not see people as “potential church members” able to help us pay for the roof, cover the bills, maintain the organization. Rather, we see every person we meet as a child of God, redeemed by Christ, worthy of our time, energy and effort.

Jesus made disciples by calling people to follow and then walking alongside them. We make disciples when we introduce them to Jesus, and then walk with them in good times and bad, in joys and sorrows as, together, we seek to follow Jesus.

Second, Life-to-Life Discipleship is about being people and a community in the NALC committed to and immersed in the Word of God. It's interesting that every congregation in the NALC joined the NALC because of our shared commitment to the truth and authority of God's Word, yet by and large, Lutherans are unfamiliar with Scripture. Many continue to think that reading the Bible is difficult and confusing, so the family Bible remains on a shelf collecting dust.

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There would have been no Reformation 500 years ago were it not for the Word of God and Martin Luther's commitment to the truth of that Word! In his famous words, Luther said, "My conscience is captive to the *Word of God!*" Most Lutherans today are not familiar enough with the Word of God to live by it, let alone be captive to it. We need a reformation, today, in Lutheranism — and it will begin by a renewal of the Word of God in our lives and in our congregations! Life-to-Life Discipleship is about inviting more and more of our pastors and members into a relationship with Jesus Christ that is immersed in, shaped by, and living the Word of God as it comes to us in the Bible. Being a disciple of Jesus is about responding to his presence in our lives, knowing him, following him, hearing his words, obeying his words as we seek to live Christ-like lives.

How can we live a Christ-like life when we don't know Holy Scripture? Congregations and pastors who are reading, studying and engaging in deep and prayerful interaction with God and his Word grow as disciples of Jesus. As disciples of Jesus, they will want to walk alongside others in love and care. A congregation filled with people who are in God's Word and seeking to obey all that Jesus has commanded us (*Matthew 28:20*) will find that new disciples are being welcomed into their midst.

Today people outside the church are not interested, generally, in joining another organization. They are drawn to the community of disciples who are following Jesus, committed to God's Word and seeking to lead faithful, prayerful lives. That's what the Church is to be — and is called to be today — a community where, through Word and Sacrament, disciples are being fed and nourished for the Christ-like life, as new disciples are coming to Christ through life-to-life relationships with other followers of Jesus.

What does this look like in congregations?

Without going into great detail, the NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship initiative encourages pastors to be involved in discipleship coaching that helps them to

reflect upon and assess their lives and ministries, setting goals that help them move forward intentionally and with accountability. Does your pastor seem stuck, stagnant, burned-out, and unhealthy? Encourage your pastor to contact a member of the Life-to-Life Discipleship leadership team to learn more, find a coach and begin a discipleship coaching relationship. The "Core Four" coaching focuses the pastor on four important areas: Life Plan, Vision Plan, Ministry Plan and Priority Management. Pastors once again experience "movement" in life, vision and ministry, developing passion and excitement for ministry.

Congregationally, the Life-to-Life Discipleship initiative focuses on "Growing intentional Disciple-making Cultures (GiDC). This is a three-year training agreement that helps congregations develop and sustain a plan to equip leaders and members in being disciples and making disciples, as commanded in the Great Commission (*Matthew 28:19-20*), with the long-term goal of helping every person mature as a disciple of Jesus (*Colossians 1:28-29*). Simply put, it begins by training the pastor and key persons to be a leadership core, which then assists the congregation in developing a discipleship culture, which finally sends disciples out into the world to make new disciples. It is the Great Commission plan of our Lord! It's not something "new and improved" but a process that is tried and true. It is "back to the basics." It is getting to the essence of what it means to be the Body of Christ!

The strategy is for every pastor, every seminarian, every congregation and every person in the NALC to be involved in Life-to-Life Discipleship! It is the goal and aim of the NALC, as we seek to be responding to our Lord's Great Commission. We invite you to be informed and involved! Life-to-Life Discipleship may very well transform the life of your congregation and your pastor!

For more information, please contact a member of the Life-to-Life Discipleship Leadership team, chaired by Pastor Eric Riesen, secretary Pastor Tom Brodbeck. Team members and contact email may be found on the NALC website.