

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

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Church mouse

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Date
July 2017

Upcoming Events

July 21 – Ice cream social front lawn of high school. If you would like to donate goodies or help in any way please see Pat McCoy.

July 22 – Phoebe annual pie sale front lawn of the church. If you would like to bake pies or help in any way please see Sharon Nesbitt.

July 23 - Ecumenical worship service on front lawn of the High School.

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.

Prayers Concerns

Please lift the following people up in prayer:

Prayers for our new pastor
Jim
Alicia
Linda
McCarthy family

Upcoming Events

July 4 - Independence Day!

July 8 - Men's prayer breakfast

July 10 - Council meeting 7:00

July 26 - St. Mark's Net Dinner

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.

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

Happy Days !!!!!

Birthdays: July

July 7 - Terri Cronin
July 17 - Michael Harrison
July 22 - Janet Abrams

Anniversaries: July

July 10 - Jeremy and Jessica Gordon
July 21 - Terri and John Cronin

THANK GOD FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY by Loyd C. Taylor

When Mayor Ike perfects his address,
And fireman Ross polishes the chrome,
Then Veterans in their uniforms dress,
When America again is loved as home;
And little Bobby and Jan get excited,
As proud flags are raised with the hoist,
When fireworks are set to be ignited,
And patriotic eyes become all moist;
As we pledge the flag and anthems sing,
And celebrate the sound of freedom's ring...
Thank God for Independence Day!

When the crowds search for shady spaces,
And foreigners with hungry eyes stare,
Then excitement shines in little faces,
As freedom's spirit permeates the air;
When high school bands march with dancing feet,
And Private Rankin is standing tall,
As the Stars and Stripes adorn each street,
When Sally Jenkins answers the call;
As whistles scream and Liberty Bell rings,
And the eagles soar on majestic wings...
Thank God for Independence Day!

**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

After School Program - every day
from 3 - 5:30 PM following school
schedule

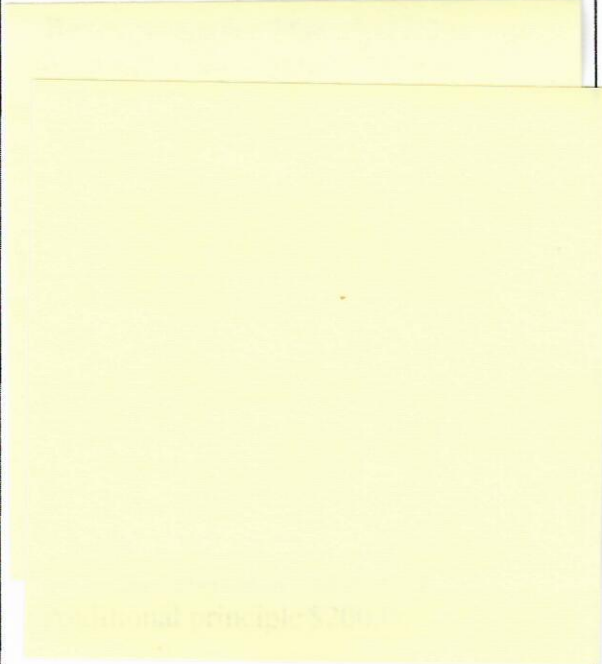
Men's Prayer breakfast - second
Saturday of each month

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

**If you have articles you would
like in the newsletters please
put them in Debbie's mailbox.**

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

Committees:



New website

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

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

Servers for July

July 2:

Acolyte - Dylan
Ushers - Denise/Kaleb
Reader - Lori
Greeter - Deb P.
Prayer - Chris
Counter - Diane

July 9:

Acolyte - Lisa
Ushers - Deb P./Marie
Reader - Jim
Greeter - Ginny
Prayer - Jim
Counter - Carrie

July 16:

Acolyte - Dylan
Ushers - Pat/Dennis
Reader - Marie
Greeter - Harry
Prayer - Beth
Counter - Debbie

July 30:

Acolyte - Dylan
Ushers - Jim/Deb
Reader - Sharon
Greeter - Maurice
Prayer - Carolyn
Counter - Carrie



REMINDER:

ECUMENICAL CHURCH SERVICE

SUNDAY – JULY 23, 2017

AT 11:00 A.M.

FRONT LAWN OF MCS HIGH SCHOOL

(No Service at St. Mark's)



The Heartbeat



Monthly Newsletter of Life Saver Ministries/ May 2017

Her Children rise up and call her blessed...

The heart of a mother holds some of the fiercest, most protective, unconditional love of all creation; as God created both male and female in His image, I often marvel at how the unrelenting, unconditional, and protective love of God is reflected in a mother's heart. I have had the privilege of witnessing some of the most incredible displays of this kind of love exemplified in some mother hearts here at Life Saver Ministries in recent months. As I began to think about this month's newsletter with May being an emphasis on Mother's Day, I could recall a mom whose love and fierce devotion to her children is truly remarkable. This mother has made a life work out of caring for children who are not biologically linked to her, but whom God clearly placed in her care beginning at her age of just 27. I have witnessed this remarkable young woman put her faith into action as she pours herself sacrificially into the lives of her children, all of whom came to her through foster care, day in and day out. Feeling the message of God's work through her heavy on my heart as I thought about the message of the May newsletter, I asked her to share as much or as little as she was willing to have others know about the journey that led up to her being Mom to five precious kids. It's a good thing I was sitting down when I read her response to me as I was a crying, dumbfounded mess. You'll see why-this is part of their story:

"The final pieces of my foster care certification paperwork was expedited because there was a desperate situation in which a 15 year old girl had been dropped off by her foster parents at a hospital and left. Abandoned. This poor young girl was in end stage renal failure and not expected to survive. I agreed to go pick her up in Boston, as terrified as I was, and from the time I brought her home, she never got sick enough to require being admitted to a hospital. I started to see that she just needed someone to love her, somewhere to belong, and hope for a better life. Fast forward nearly 5 years later, and my daughter is now working part-time and attending college to obtain a degree in Child Development so that she can help other kids like her. About a year and a half later, I received a call regarding two girls ages 8 and 3 who had been in the care of a foster home, and were both tiny little things with the 3 year old being barely able to walk. I later found out that she had been being kept nearly entirely in a pack-and-play with a crib mattress over the top so that she wasn't even able to stand. She remembered climbing out one day and being beaten because of it. Both girls told of being terribly hungry and crying for food along with having pillows held over their face if they cried, among other horrific abuses. It took months and years of SO much love and patience, and allowing them to keep food close to them at all times, sometimes just being able to clutch an animal cracker or fruit snack was enough to give them the peace to fall asleep, the assurance that they would have enough. The biological parents were drug addicts and extremely neglectful so we are still working through layers of anger and behaviors. Being able to adopt my girls has been an incredible blessing and yet the challenges have been and continue to be great. The biological parents were drug addicts and extremely neglectful so we are still working through layers of anger and behaviors. Challenging to say the least. I took a break for a couple of months after adopting my daughters and as a family, we decided that we would be very picky, at least in the beginning, about taking on any other placements. I had a girl living with me through foster care for over three years and she was removed and placed back with family which broke my heart. I wasn't sure I could do that again. So, if God wanted me to keep someone else, He would have to be very clear. A couple days later, I got a call from a friend who lived down the road. She was a foster mom and had gotten a call in the middle of the night about two little ones in need. She told me, "I think these two are supposed to be yours." I agreed to take them on respite (temporary relief for their current family). I couldn't sleep for a couple of nights as I was excited to meet them! When I did, I found they were beautiful children and so, so broken. The little girl who was three had a mouth full of cavities and was in constant excruciating pain until they were removed. She was a timid, scared little girl, and no wonder! Excruciating pain, scary procedures, and surrounded by strangers! The little boy was 11 months old, weighed 15 pounds, had no muscle tone in his legs (in fact, they would shake when I tried to stand him up), his poor bottom was covered in open, oozing blisters, and he had horrific night terrors and nightmares all night long, every single night. And I loved them instantly!

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My three daughters fell in love with them , too, as did the rest of my family. So two weeks later, they moved in with me permanently. By now their older siblings had been moved in with my friend and the horror stories we found out were heartbreaking. The older children recalled their younger brother (the 11 month old) being left home alone every weekend. When he cried, his birth mother would either hit him in the head til he went unconscious or choke him until he passed out. She mostly left him in his crib but would sometimes throw him into the wall or use him as a punching bag. She did the same thing with the older brother. She was a drug addict and threw parties quite frequently during which she would force the children to drink whole bottles of alcohol until they passed out and then let her friends do whatever they wanted to the kids. The oldest child recalled there being no food in the house quite frequently so they went hungry. It has been over two years now and the adoption is pending on these two and it has only been in the past month that the little boy has gotten through most nights without nightmares. I honestly don't know how I survived the two years of constant wake-ups and screaming terrors . I can't believe how far they've come!"

Do you see what I mean? This young woman has chosen a life work of being a mother and in so doing is fulfilling our Lord and Savior's most clear mandates for His followers. Love others unconditionally. Defend the defenseless. Serve sacrificially. It has been an absolute honor to get to know her better through the ministry of Life Savers. At some point, a choice for life was made for each of these precious children. An option existed to terminate a pregnancy, to abort a baby, to end a life. That was not the choice that was made and I am so grateful that these precious children were given life. I am equally grateful that this precious mother has outstretched her arms to those in need and has answered the call to care for the least of these, to truly honor life. To encourage someone to make a choice for life is a tremendous blessing. To commit to serving that life for a lifetime (or atleast the first couple decades of it!) is a high calling that is of equal importance. Thank you to each and every one of you who are part of this ministry; I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that we are equipping the young mothers we serve with godly counsel, sound Biblical truths, and a whole lot of love and friendship when they come through our doors. I believe that we are playing an enormous role in helping to prevent the situations of abuse and neglect that arise so often in our communities as we give moms the encouragement and skills necessary to be successful parents, as we show them in word and deed that they matter and have a value that is immeasurable, and as we stand firm in the belief that there is no excuse for bad parenting, there is no excuse for bad choices, and there is no excuse for a miserable existence. All of this being boldly proclaimed from the platform of God's Word where He assures us that He came to give us life and to give it abundantly. So, this month especially, let's celebrate the gift of hope of our risen Lord and Savior and the gift of a mother's heart that so clearly reflects the unconditional love of the One who created it. To Him be the glory forever and ever!
Abbey Ballard, Ministry Director

***Stop in and see us at 14-16 East Pine Street, Gloversville or call 518.725.5777/ email: lifesaverheartbeat@gmail.com**
Be sure to view our supporter website at lifesaverheartbeat.com

Save The Date! 10.7.17

The evening of Saturday, October 7 will be our 2017 Fundraising Banquet! Please save the date and plan to spend an evening of food, fellowship and fundraising together as we work toward some amazing goals for the upcoming year. We are in need of promoters to be sure that churches and groups know about this special event, so if you would be interested in assisting us in spreading the word, please contact Abbey at 725-5777 or at lifesaverheartbeat@gmail.com!



A picture's worth a thousand words....above top, some little ones enjoy our Mom & Me Art Class making a windsock; middle, some dear friends from Love City Church provided our ladies and their mothers with music and a great message from God's Word at our Mother's Day Ladies Night Out! Bottom, a precious young lady that's become part of our Soulutions family! All of this made possible thanks to your generosity- Thank You!

In your hearing

Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." — Luke 4:16-21

As I am addressing your questions about ministry, leadership and the NALC, I received another question about preaching. Obviously, this is important to members of the NALC, and rightly so! Within the first five months of 2017, two questions have been about sermons. This month, however, I run the risk of disappointing you, as the question is about how pastors prepare sermons.

I think it is a worthwhile question, as the more hearers understand and consider the preaching task, the more they will value and take to heart the Word of God preached Sunday after Sunday.

My answer may be disappointing because my guess is each pastor approaches preparation for preaching differently. Ask 100 preachers how they prepare their sermons, and you will surely get 100 unique answers. Realizing that, there are still several things that can be said about sermon preparation.

It must always begin with prayer and the Word of God. The preacher who relies on himself or herself runs the risk of presenting, not the Word of God preached, but one's own thoughts reflecting one's own agenda or ax to grind.



Ministry Matters

Pastor David Wendel

Assistant to the Bishop
for Ministry and Ecumenism

Beginning with prayer keeps the focus right — as the preacher prays, "Thy will be done, Lord, through me!" At the same time, the preacher is praying that God would open his Word to us so that we keep to the biblical text and only the biblical text.

The lack of focus on Scripture is, perhaps, the greatest weakness in preaching today. There may be several reasons for this, but one is surely the fact that, for the last decade or so, preachers have been encouraged to begin with the biblical text, but to then let imagination take them in other directions. It is only a short hop, then, from beginning with one's own imagination and creativity, to handling God's Word of truth only peripherally, or as an afterthought.

Martin Luther mentioned this when he said: "Let him (the preacher) take care to keep to the text and attend to what is before him and make people understand that. Those preachers who say whatever comes into their mouths remind me of a maid going to market. When she meets another maid she stops and chats a while, then she meets another and talks with her, too, and then a third and a fourth, and so gets to market very slowly. So with preachers who wander off the text, they would like to say everything at one time, but they can't." (*"Conversations with Luther," Smith and Gallinger, Pilgrim Press, Boston, 1915*)

The reason that preachers should stay with the biblical text, preach only biblical sermons and help people understand Scripture, is because it is only the Word of God that touches hearers, convicts

Continued on Page 15

Continued from Page 14

hearers, drives hearers to the Savior, and, finally, sets them free through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ!

A preacher may be a fine wordsmith, an entertaining speaker, an engaging storyteller or a passionate, persuasive political crusader — none of which will save and redeem, heal and restore the broken, the lost, the sinful, the struggling. Jesus is the only way, truth and life. Jesus alone saves. Again, Luther points to this in an Advent sermon, writing:

“A minister of Christ is a steward in the mysteries of God. He should regard himself and insist that others regard him as one who administers to the household of God nothing but Christ and the things of Christ. In other words, he should preach the pure Gospel, the true faith, that Christ alone is our life, our way, our wisdom, power, glory, salvation; and that all we can accomplish of ourselves is but death, error, foolishness, weakness, shame and condemnation.”

Because we Lutherans believe that the Word, written, read and preached is a “means of grace,” through which God gives us forgiveness, grace and salvation, it is not enough for a sermon to be a message dealing with a contemporary topic or concern or a video presentation that is of a generally religious nature.

It is also not enough for a sermon to be “about” Jesus, “about” God or even “about” the Bible. A faithful biblical sermon communicates Christ, presents Christ, makes Christ present — as the Word made flesh to dwell among us, to bring grace and truth to the hearers!

In the passage above from Luke 4, we see that Jesus reads a passage from Isaiah — about preaching good news to the poor, release to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, setting free the oppressed, announcing the Lord’s favor. Jesus reads the biblical passage, but then he proclaims that this is all happening “in their hearing!”

In Jesus’ very presence in the congregation, these things are taking place — people are hearing good news, those in bondage to sin, death and devil are

being set free, the blind are seeing, and all are being blessed by the Lord.

Jesus is not saying that the good news is “about” him, but that he *is* good news! He is God in the flesh! When Jesus is present with us, these things happen, by the power of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, on the Word being proclaimed.

In every sermon, these things should take place, in the hearer’s hearing. This is the meaning of preaching — Jesus is present, the Scriptures are opened to us, the Good News incarnate falls on our ears, is received in our minds and goes straight to the heart! And we are set free, redeemed, forgiven, transformed.

Only Jesus, Son of God and Savior, Spirit-anointed, can effect change in the heart and life of sermon-hearers. This is why the preaching task is so critically important, and why the preacher must begin with prayer and deep involvement with the Word of God. This is why, in every sermon, the preacher must “take care to keep to the text and attend to what is before him and make people understand that.”

While this may not answer the question, “How do pastors prepare their sermons,” I hope we have provided some insight into the preaching task, rightly begun and properly focused.

If you have questions or topics related to ministry in the NALC that you’d like to have addressed in the Ministry Matters articles, please email me at dwendel@thenalc.org.

Visiting New York City?

*Immanuel Lutheran Church,
a beautiful and historic NALC church
on Manhattan’s Upper East Side,
invites you to worship with them.
Worship is at 11 a.m. on Sundays
and 6:30 p.m. on Wednesdays.*

www.immanuelnyc.org