

# St. Mark's Lutheran Church

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## New website

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

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

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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. Going forward 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.

## Prayers Concerns

Please lift the following people up in prayer:

Prayers for our new pastor  
Pastor Neil  
Virginia  
Brenda  
Bob Varella  
Robin  
Skip Becker

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## Upcoming Events

**June 7 - Council Meeting 6:00**

**June 11 - Men's breakfast**

**June 19 - Happy Father's Day**

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Speakers for our upcoming June services:

June 5 - Pastor Dave Houck  
June 12 - William Cole  
June 19 - Pastor Dave Houck  
June 26 - TBD

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# St. Mark's Lutheran Church

## Happy Days !!!!!

### Birthdays: June

June 6 - Austin Roney  
June 10 - Madie Palmatier  
June 17 - John Warner  
June 24 - Vicki Chichester  
June 25 - Trudy Shaul and Denise Minton  
June 26 - Kenny Hanley  
June 30 - Nanette Amendola and Joshua Warner

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Mother's Day was an exceptional day at St. Mark's. Not only did we celebrate mothers of all kinds, but the ladies were treated to a delicious breakfast prepared by our Men's Group. Thank you to all who made donations, cooked, served, washed dishes and cleaned up. The women who attended were truly blessed as you made their day very special!

Zumba Classes will be **Thursdays at 9:30** in the fellowship hall. Check the calendar in the hallway for more details.

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**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

Creative Women's Ministry - Fourth Friday of the month at 7 PM

# St. Mark's Lutheran Church

## Servers for June

### June 5:

Acolyte - Dylan  
Ushers - Bill and Bonnie  
Reader - Ginny  
Greeter - Janet  
Prayer - Beth  
Counter - Diane

### June 12

Acolyte - TBD  
Ushers - Denise/Kaleb  
Reader - Deb B.  
Greeter - Deb P.  
Prayer - Deb B.  
Counter - Carrie

### June 19:

Acolyte - Dylan  
Ushers - Deb P./Marie  
Reader - Ted  
Greeter - Ginny  
Prayer - Ted  
Counter - Deb

### June 26:

Acolyte - TBD  
Ushers - Pat/Dennis F.  
Reader - Nanette  
Greeter - Harry  
Prayer - Georgia  
Counter - Diane

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Virginia Peterson is now staying at the Northwood Rehab Rosewood Garden. If you would like to send her a card or visit her the address is 284 Troy Road, Rensselaer, NY 12144 or call her at 518-728-7696. I am sure she would love to hear from all of us!



# What Is a Pastor?

## *A Pastor Must Be Found Trustworthy*

St. Paul writes, in 1 Corinthians 4:1-2:

*This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.*

In this instance, Paul is writing about himself as an apostle. However, we can hear him speaking also to pastors and other leaders in the Body of Christ. Pastors are indeed called to be servants of Christ and so stewards of the mysteries of God. And Paul says — when you are called to be a steward — you must be found trustworthy. As we continue our series on pastors and pastoral leadership, one of the most important challenges is for the servant of Christ to be found trustworthy!

A wise pastor once shared with me that the pastor ought to make no significant changes until earning the love, confidence and trust of the congregation. The customary rule was to wait at least a year before making big changes in a congregation. In some congregations and with some pastors, it may take longer than that.

Once there is confidence and trust, a pastor's ministry will generally thrive. Until that exists, the congregation may view every action, decision and initiative of the pastor as suspect. Trust is the key to pastoral leadership and faithful shepherding. The question remains, however — how does the pastor earn the trust and confidence of the congregation?

The answer may sound ridiculously simple: A pastor earns the trust of the congregation by showing herself or himself *worthy* of trust! How does the pastor accomplish that? There are a number of ways a pastor proves worthy of trust.

**1. Preach the word in season and out of season, and preach only the Word of God!** (2 Timothy 4:2). NALC Bishop Emeritus Paull Spring writes: "The most effective way for a pastor to build trust in



### *Ministry Matters*

**Pastor David Wendel**

Assistant to the Bishop  
for Ministry and Ecumenism

the congregation is through a faithful ministry of preaching and teaching the Word of God. Isaiah says, 'Thy word shall not return to me empty.' Truer words were never spoken. A pastor who ministers the Biblical word of Law and Gospel, according to the Lutheran Confessions, is laying a firm foundation for an ongoing, trusting relationship with a congregation."

Unfortunately, in our time of shrinking worship attendance and involvement, pastors are often tempted to turn to what they hope might fill the pews once again, with all manner of stories, gimmicks and strategies. Put that together with our human need to push our own agenda in sermons, and in many places you will find the sermon time anything but preaching of the Word of God!

Congregations will naturally react to such abuse of pastoral position, as they will note, and rightly so, that they aren't being fed with the solid food of God's Word. They will sense the pastor is not worthy of their trust, offering something other than the Word of God.

**2. Deep listening and openly sharing.** Retired Bishop Ron Warren comments, "Building trust between a pastor and congregation includes a balance between deep listening which focuses on the other persons and openly sharing personal viewpoints with care and compassion. Jesus was a master of building trust in relationships."

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Most pastors, if they are honest, will admit that they are better *speakers* than *listeners*. This causes folks to perceive that the pastor thinks “it’s all about me — the pastor.” It is a constant challenge for pastors to be focused on and attentive to the other — the one who is sharing with us a hurt, a concern, a need. And then, being caring and compassionate, we may offer a personal response that meets them where they are. Trust develops as the other person senses that their pastor is truly listening and hearing what they are saying.

### **3. Keep confidential matters confidential.**

Nothing shows that a pastor is not trustworthy more than the divulging of information intended to be confidential. It is critically important to the care of the souls entrusted to us that pastors keep confidences. Unless given specific permission to do so, pastors ought not share about the health, well-being or challenges of parishioners — not in sermons, not in announcement, and not in public prayers. The sharing of confidential information in just one or two circumstances will quickly convince the congregation as a whole that the pastor is not able to keep confidences. This lack of trustworthiness will often compromise the pastor’s ministry as a whole, as it raises doubts about the pastor’s commitment to the nature and aim of the call to ministry.

**4. Pastoral visitation and awareness of the congregation’s history.** Retired Bishop Ralph Kemski states, “Pastoral visitation must be a priority when arriving in the parish. Pastors should listen carefully to members and be aware of the congregation’s history.” There are many reasons for pastors to visit the households and/or visit with those in their spiritual care. This is how relationships grow and develop. This is how trust is built, and this is how pastors come to understand and appreciate the congregation’s unique history, customs and culture. When a congregation comes to believe that the pastor truly values each and every follower of Jesus in his or her care, listening and seeking to be sensitive to what is important and cherished in this particular congregation, they will come to trust the pastor. The pastor will be seen as wanting to be part of the community, not an outsider trying to change long-held patterns and practices. It may well be that there are patterns and practices that

need to be changed, but change never happens effectively and positively until the shepherd has earned the love and trust of the congregation.

**5. Build consensus and foster joint decision-making in all things.** In this time when worship attendance and involvement are declining in all congregations, it is common for call committees and congregations to indicate in the call process that they are looking for a pastor who will shake things up and help the congregation “turn things around!” This leads the newly called pastor to come in ready to just that — and is surprised in six months when folks are complaining there are too many changes made unilaterally by the new pastor.

Someone sent me a cartoon of a church council meeting where someone says, “We need to get a new young pastor with lots of new ideas to help us do the same things we’ve always done!” This is all too true, and it is a trap. Regardless of the spoken intentions of call committees and councils about “stirring things up,” the new pastor ought not make unilateral changes or decisions about anything until earning the confidence and trust of the congregation, and especially the congregational leadership.

Listening to folks and learning the history of the congregation is Job Number 3 for the pastor, after Job Number 1, which is preaching and teaching the Word of God, and Job Number 2, which is showing oneself to be worthy of trust. Pastors who make changes too quickly to worship, sanctuary arrangements, structure, schedule, etc. will do so to their own peril. Similarly, a new pastor who begins a ministry by authorizing purchases and spending without the full consensus and support of the council will hinder the development of trust and confidence, creating difficulties down the road.

**6. We build trust when we do what we say we’re going to do!** This is important advice for each of us in any relationship — whether marriage, work, family, church. We build trust — we earn others’ trust when we do what we say we’re going to do. If a husband says he’s going to be faithful to his wife, but has an affair, he breaks trust and shows himself unworthy of trust. To rebuild that trust, he must be

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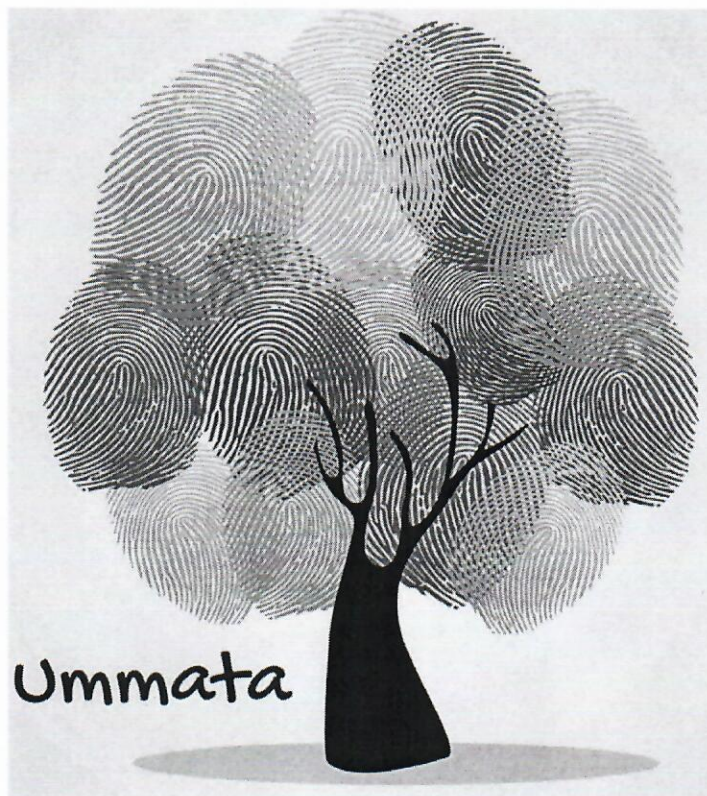


# Multi-National Mission and Leadership Conference is in April

Ummata: Multi-National Mission and Leadership Conference will be held April 11-13 at the Holiday Inn Express in Dublin, Ohio (suburban Columbus). Keynote speakers include Pastor Gemechis Buba and Pastor Brian and Christine Hughes.

Join us for this two-and-a-half-day training conference for multi-national pastors, evangelists and leadership teams, providing worship, teaching, training, discussion, and prayer centered on the theme, "Ummata," the Oromo word for "community," based on 1 Peter 2:9-10.

For more information or to register, please visit [thenalc.org/ummata-conference!](http://thenalc.org/ummata-conference!)



## Ministry Matters

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faithful, as he has promised. For a pastor or a council leader, people will trust us when we do what we say we will do.

If the pastor says he will visit a parishioner this week, he should visit that parishioner. If the pastor says she will be at a meeting, she must be at that meeting. Of course, emergencies happen and schedules change, but trust comes from being accountable, responsible and doing what we say. This is one of the simplest ways a pastor — or anyone — earns the trust of others! And just because we are in the loving, caring Body of Christ, we ought not think we are relieved of accountability, responsibility, and the need to be worthy of trust.

My hope is that these reflections on pastoral trustworthiness will be helpful to pastors and congregations, as we seek to more faithfully minister in Christ's name, as servants of our Lord and joint stewards of the mysteries of God!

## Thrivent Choice Dollars deadline is March 31

March 31 is the deadline for members of Thrivent Financial to designate Thrivent Choice Dollars from 2015 to the ministry or charity of their choice.

The North American Lutheran Church and North American Lutheran Seminary as well as most NALC congregations in the United States are eligible to receive Thrivent Choice Dollars.

Thrivent members who are eligible to direct Choice Dollars may do so online at [www.thrivent.com](http://www.thrivent.com) or by calling 1-800-847-4836.

### List of congregations seeking pastors is online

The updated list of congregations seeking NALC pastors is available online at [thenalc.org/pastoral-vacancies](http://thenalc.org/pastoral-vacancies).