



# St. Mark's Lutheran Church

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## From Pastor Rodney

See Pastor's report.

E-mail: [Pastorrodney@midtel.net](mailto:Pastorrodney@midtel.net)

Pastor now has office hours Tuesday through Friday from 9-1. Please call ahead in case he had to leave.

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## New website

Our new webpage is up and running. Check it out. It is awesome! Thank you Angela. The address is

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

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## Looking for new members!

If you would like to become a member of St. Mark's Lutheran Church please speak with Pastor Rodney.

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Did you know that St. Mark's collects the small empty ink cartridges from your printer, fax machine or copier? The ladies take them when shopping for office supplies and we received a credit for every one that we return. There is a small basket in the narthex to recycle yours.

## Prayers Concerns

Please lift the following people up in prayer:

Andrew Lamont  
Virginia Peterson  
Jim and Deb's granddaughter Alyssa Robin

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## Upcoming Events

April 8 - Council meeting 6 PM

April 19 - Youth meeting 6:30 - 8:30

April 20 - Confirmation during worship service

April 23- NET dinner at St. Mark's at 5:30

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## Hall Usage

Many groups have asked to use our facility for their meetings. If you happen to be at the church please double check that all lights have been turned off and both doors are locked.

Also please leave the doors going into the sanctuary open for the winter.

### Who's your Daddy

I read this story recently and I was deeply impacted by it. It was written in <http://www.turnbacktogod.com/story-whos-your-daddy/> shared by Gregory no last name given. He wrote, "A **seminary professor** was vacationing with his wife in Gatlinburg, TN.

One morning, they were eating breakfast at a little restaurant, hoping to enjoy a quiet, family meal. While they were waiting for their food, they noticed a distinguished looking, white-haired man moving from table to table, visiting with the guests.

The professor leaned over and whispered to his wife, "I hope he doesn't come over here." But sure enough, the man did come over to their table.

"Where are you folks from?" he asked in a friendly voice.

"Oklahoma," they answered.

"Great to have you here in Tennessee" the stranger said. "What do you do for a living?"

"I teach at a seminary," he replied.

"Oh, so you teach preachers how to preach, do you? Well, I've got a really great story for you." And with that, the gentleman pulled up a chair and sat down at the table with the couple.

The professor groaned and thought to himself, "Great... Just what I need another preacher story!"

The man started, "See that mountain over there? (pointing out the restaurant window). Not far from the base of that mountain, there was a boy born to an unwed mother. He had a hard time growing up, because every place he went, he was always asked the same question, '*Hey boy, who's your daddy?*'

"Whether he was at school, in the grocery store or drug store, people would ask the same question, '*Who's your daddy?*' He would hide at recess and lunch time from other students. He would avoid going in to stores because that question hurt him so bad.

"When he was about 12 years old, a new preacher came to his church. He would always go in late and slip out early to avoid hearing the question, '*Who's your daddy?*'

But one day, the new preacher said the benediction so fast he got caught and had to walk out with the crowd. Just about the time he got to the back door, the new preacher, not knowing anything about him, put his hand on his shoulder and asked him, '*Son, who's your daddy?*'

"The whole church got deathly quiet. He could feel every eye in the church looking at him. Now everyone would finally know the answer to the question, *"Who's your daddy'.*

This new preacher, though, sensed the situation around him and using discernment that only the Holy Spirit could give, said the following to that scared little boy... *"Wait a minute!"* he said, *"I know who you are, I see the family resemblance now. You are a child of God."* With that he patted the boy on his shoulder, and said, *"Boy, you've got a great inheritance, go and claim it."* With that, the boy smiled for the first time in a long time and walked out the door a changed person.

He was never the same again. Whenever anybody asked him, 'Who's your Daddy?' he'd just tell them, *"I'm a Child of God"*

The distinguished gentleman got up from the table and said, "Isn't that a great story?". The professor responded that it really was a great story!

As the man turned to leave, he said, "You know, if that new preacher hadn't told me that I was one of God's children, I probably never would have amounted to anything!" And he walked away.

The seminary professor and his wife were stunned. He called the waitress over and asked her, "Do you know who that man was who just left that was sitting at our table?"

The waitress grinned and said, *"Of course, everybody here knows him. That's Ben Hooper. He's the former governor of Tennessee!"*

It's amazing that when we are at our worst God is always at his best. He sends people in our lives always at the right time with words of grace. Like the former governor whose life was changed by that encounter with God's servant, so many people are being blest everyday.

During this Lenten season, let us make it our duty to be a blessing to someone, knowing that we are called to show love even to the least of them. Blessed Lent!

Pr. Royan Rodney.

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## Thrivent Challenge

Thrivent is offering a challenge to churches who serve the community through outreach programs. For every dollar donated to our food pantry between December 1, 2014 and March 31, 2014, Thrivent Foundation will grant 50 cents per \$1.00 raised up to a total grant of \$5,000. As of 3/22 we have raised \$4968.50.

Thank you!



# St. Mark's Lutheran Church

## Servers for April

### April 6:

Acolyte - Hannah/Mary  
Ushers - Bonnie/Bill  
Reader - Jim B.  
Greeter - Maurice  
Prayer - Georgia  
Counter - Debbie

### April 13:

Acolyte - Gabby/Kaleb  
Ushers - Dean/Lori  
Reader - Deb P.  
Greeter - Pat  
Prayer - Beth  
Counter - Diane

### April 20:

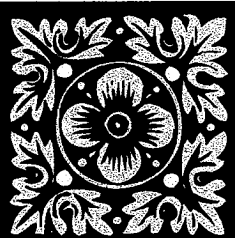
Acolyte - Morgan/Logan  
Ushers - Dennis/Diane  
Reader - Mike H.  
Greeter - Janet  
Prayer - Gene  
Counter - Carrie

### April 27:

Acolyte - Jenna  
Ushers - Sharon/Tom  
Reader - Ted L.  
Greeter - Debbie  
Prayer - Ginny  
Counter - Debbie

### Choir for Ecumenical Good Friday Service:

An invitation has been extended to all who wish to sing at the ecumenical Good Friday service on April 18<sup>th</sup>. Rehearsals will be on March 9, 16, 23, 30, April 6 and 13 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Reformed Church. Attendance at all of the rehearsals is not mandatory. If you have any questions, please contact Russ Ryan at 827-4093.



# St. Mark's Lutheran Church

## Happy Days !!!!!

### Birthdays: April

April 1 - Virginia Peterson and Jerry  
Bowman

April 3 - Pat Becker

April 5 - Nikki Gordon and Julie  
Sammons

April 11 - Carolyn Wyckoff and  
Marie Cater

April 19 - Hannah Martin

April 20 - Diane France

April 24 - Maurice Van Dyke

April 25 - Gabby DeRocher

April 26 - Lori Warner and Liam  
Grapes

April 28 - Bill Gordon

April 30 - Virgil Cater

### Anniversaries: April

April 22 - Ted and Debbie  
Palmatier

## Legend of the Dogwood

An old and beautiful legend says that, at the time of the crucifixion, the dogwood was comparable in size to the oak tree and other monarchs of the forest. Because of its firmness and strength it was selected as the timber of the cross, but to be put to such cruel use greatly distressed the tree. Sensing this, the crucified Jesus in His gentle pity for the sorrow and suffering of all said to it: "Because of your sorrow and pity for My sufferings, never again will the dogwood tree grow large enough to be used as a cross. Henceforth it will be slender, bent and twisted and its blossoms will be in the form of a cross - two long and two short petals. In the center of the outer edge of each petal there will be nail prints - brown with rust and stained with red - and in the center of the flower will be a crown of thorns, and all who see this will remember."

## SPECIAL SERVICES:

### Special services

1. Ash Wednesday: was on March 5, 2014 it was a joint service between St. Mark's and CTSL. We invited the area churches and a few people attended.
2. Lenten Service- There will be a Lenten soup, supper and devotions every Wednesday at 7pm at CTSL, all are welcome.
3. Maundy Thursday- There will be a joint worship between St. Mark's and CTSL. Please spread the word around and invite as many people as you can.
4. Good Friday- Ecumenical service at the Middleburgh, Reformed church, 7pm.
5. Easter- There is an ecumenical Sunrise service on the mountain in Huntersland, it's done outdoor, the service will begin at 6:18 am the time the sun will rise on that day. After the service there will be a breakfast at the Middleburgh Reformed church.

# Repentance and Discipleship

Dear Followers of Christ Jesus,

As we begin this Lenten journey, the Scripture texts remind us of the importance of confession and repentance. It is important for us to be honest, transparent, and deeply troubled by our sin and its effect on our lives and those around us. Martin Luther uses the illustration of a mirror when referring to the nature of the Law in the Word of God and its impact in our life. It forces us to see the reality of sin at work in us to the very core of our being, our nature that is sinful and unclean.

What applies to us as individuals also applies to our life together in our congregations and to our shared ministry as the North American Lutheran Church.

The issue that often prevents us from looking too deeply or lingering at that “mirror” for very long is not the Gospel of God’s forgiveness, mercy and reconciliation. We accept and marvel at the truth and wonder of this great grace in spite of being unworthy and undeserving of all Christ has accomplished for us. We take full advantage of what some have called, “the gospel of sin management.” We sin, we ask for forgiveness trusting in the grace of Jesus, and the cycle is repeated endlessly. The category in this process, mentioned frequently by Jesus, but seldom contemplated by His followers today, is *repentance*.

Repentance begins with sorrow and remorse for our sin, but it includes much more. Turning away from the direction we were moving — following ourselves or our culture, leading us away from Christ — and turning back to Jesus is much more involved. This component of repentance relies on His grace to bring transformation and change to our lives, inviting us to both think and act differently. Repentance moves us from disobedience to a life of faith, obediently following Jesus. Through repentance the power of His grace transforms our worldview and our behaviors.

The state of the church in North America is something for which we all bear responsibility and culpability. John Dickerson, in his book *The Great Evangelical Recession*, describes our current



*From the Bishop*

**Bishop John Bradosky**

situation and how we reached this point. In addition to your study of the Scriptures during this season of Lent, I encourage you to read this book. I commend it to you because the parallels between evangelicals and mainline denominations are nearly identical.

While many refuse to acknowledge what is occurring — as happened during the financial recession of several years ago — others refuse to believe that it will have any impact on us. Some are content to believe that if we just continue to do what we have always done the church will soon begin to grow without any necessity on our part to change — to truly repent.

The reality is that the church’s numbers are in decline, donations are drying up. Political agendas are dividing the church from within, and our culture is not only becoming increasingly antagonistic but hostile towards those who take seriously their faith in Jesus Christ and are bold enough to share it.

To make matters worse, trends that used to take decades to develop are now occurring at an ever accelerating pace. “Whether in ministry or in industry, those who observe and embrace this new rapid speed of change become survivors and innovators. Those who ignore the change and the speed of it become its victims,” Dickerson said.

Not only is the church failing to keep pace with population growth, but we have been content to prop up our view of the church by overestimating our size. That is true for mainline denominations as well as evangelicals. We believe that we will attract

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more people to the faith by attesting to our success with grossly inflated statistics. The few mega churches that are growing are not reaching unreached people with the Gospel but welcoming those from other denominations who are self-destructing.

Dickerson reminds us that the fastest growing subcultures in North America are those who express a militant antagonism toward Christians who take seriously the Word of God. For some time leaders within various church bodies have used statistics to talk about their size and voting strength, spending more time playing political games than reaching others with the Gospel and often elevating political positions to the same level as spiritual and theological orthodoxy. The effect has been anything but endearing to those around us. In fact, many in North America have a higher opinion of Muslims than Christians who truly believe that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Perhaps you have heard others say that we may lose our young people for a period of time, but they will return. It was the case for many years that for every five that left the church four eventually returned. Today, the inverse of those figures is reality. For every five that leave the church only one returns. Dickerson's description of the reality of the church in our culture is staggering but backed by honest statistical analysis and specific anecdotal evidence.

Far more important is what he describes as solutions for recovery. He writes, "Change is risky. Action is risky. But failing to act is even riskier. Simply being aware of these trends will not change the future of our ministries. Changing the course of our ministries will be difficult. It will be misunderstood. It will be demanding. But times of crisis require leaders to lead."

If I were to summarize his solutions in a word, that word would be *discipleship*. It will mean acknowledging our weakness and depending completely on the strength of Christ. It will mean not changing or abandoning our faith but proclaiming it by living it. It will not mean changing our view regarding the authority or interpretation of the Scripture but learning how to share its truth in ways

that truly reflect the love of the Father, the compelling grace of the Son, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

"The body is bleeding out because its leaders, its servants, and its people have forgotten how to make disciples as Jesus described and modeled. This is real people, dealing with real life together — and pointing each other to Jesus. What we are failing at is real ministry. Not commercial or mass-marketed events, but real ministry in real lives — the way Paul, Peter, and John did it — the way Jesus taught it. We have somehow lost it on a large scale." We must begin to reach and engage people with authentic, relational discipleship. This is not a quick fix. Disciples cannot be mass-produced; they must be cultivated one relationship at a time.

There will be many who will argue against this simple but demanding discipleship with a multitude of excuses. Some will say it is too simple. Others will say it is too difficult. Some will even contend it is not Lutheran! I would agree with Dickerson, "How heated and passionate we become when defending our complacency, our apathy toward Christ's discipleship mandate."

The journey of Lent begins with confession, but it is also a season of repentance. This repentance must not be just sentiment or feeling of regret, but action in the direction of all that it means to follow Jesus. I believe we who are part of the North American Lutheran Church are heading in the right direction. It is not an easy journey but it is life-giving. There is only one place the abundant life is found, in Christ, in being His disciple and discipling others.

It is always good to be with you following Christ Jesus, especially this season of Lent,

**Bishop John Bradosky**

## **Bishop to host tour of Holy Land**

NALC Bishop John Bradosky will host a trip to Israel and Jordan Nov. 13-22, 2014.

For more information contact Pam Charas at [mcharas@earthlink.net](mailto:mcharas@earthlink.net) or 937-434-0993.

## Social Ministries – 2013

What an awesome God we serve! He provides so that we can be a blessing to our neighbors.

The following is a report highlighting most of our 2013 ministries:

### Food Pantry

We received donations from MCS Clubs, Christ the Shepherd Church, United Methodist Churches in Middleburgh and Huntersland, Boy Scouts, U.S. Post Office, Albany Social Security offices and community friends. Our congregation has been generous with non-perishable donations as well as monetary ones.

We continued to purchase food from NE Regional Food Bank and received a \$700 grant from the Hunger Prevention Nutrition Assistance Program.

The assistance from all sources made it possible to offer more nutritious foods and maintain our pantry's supplies. Kudos to all!!!

2013 referrals to our pantry and clothing closet came from MCS Elementary School, Head Start, Community Maternity Services, DSS, Berkshire Farms, SCCAP, Catholic Charities, WIC, Emergency Management and Mental Health.

Number of visit to food pantry – 222  
Number of children fed – 249  
Number of adults fed – 351  
Number of elderly fed – 60  
Total Number of Individuals fed – 660

In addition, 2 Thanksgiving and 2 Christmas baskets were distributed.

Thrivent Food Pantry Challenge – Thrivent is offering a challenge to churches who serve their community through outreach programs. For every dollar donated to our food pantry between December 1, 2013, and March 31, 2014, they will grant 50 cents per \$1.00 raised. We have gratefully accepted the challenge.



Clothing Closet – Donations came from members of our congregation and community. We were also able to answer the need for clothing, shoes, boots, bedding, household and kitchen items. A relationship with “The Everything Shoppe” allowed us to help with specific needs. In addition, two large boxes of hats, mittens, and scarves were sent to Wings As Eagles Ministries.

Number of children served – 56

Number of adults served – 42

Total Number of Individuals served – 98

In July we hosted a summer band ice cream social. Delicious desserts were enjoyed by many. The fellowship was wonderful and the money raised was to benefit the food pantry. Later that month, theme baskets were donated for a silent auction and the proceeds were given to the youth for their activities.

“Coats for Kids” – In cooperation with SCCAP, St. Mark’s hosted a coat, hat, mitten and scarf give-away. Items were both new and slightly used. Nineteen coats are keeping recipients warm this winter.

School supplies were provided for three middle school children.

Christmas Appeal – 37 Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes were packed and sent to Samaritan’s Purse. Over \$600 in Walmart gift cards helped to provide gifts for children through WAEM at Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

Coffee Hour – Many families prepared yummy refreshments to be served after our worship services. We all enjoyed the good food and fellowship. Thank you so much!

“Bread” Ministry – A “bread” ministry continued this past year. Bread and pastries received from Panera’s, Stewart’s, and Pepperidge Farms were shared with the Schoharie Presbyterian Church pantry and the Middleburgh Reformed Church pantry.

NET Dinners – The fourth Wednesday of each month, we prepared dinner for our neighbors. Donations helped to defray expenses.

Our Prayer – *“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.”* – Romans 12:10-13

In His Service,

Pat McCoy