



# 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.

## 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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## CPR/AED/First Aid Class:

Two classes will be offered - one in January and one in February. Watch for sign up sheets once the dates are set.

## Prayers Concerns

Please lift the following people up in prayer:

Marie's sister Ruth

Inger

Harold Peterson

Doris Diamond's son Ken

Bill and Bonnie

## Upcoming Events

**December 10 - Council meeting  
6 PM**

**December 13 - Youth fundraiser  
@ Miracle on Main Street 5:30**

**December 14 - Youth Christmas  
Party 6:30 - 8:00. Bring a friend!**

**December 24 - Christmas Eve  
service 7:00**

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If you would like to donate Walmart gift cards to Wings as Eagles to provide Christmas gifts for the children please bring them to church and give them to Carolyn.



# St. Mark's Lutheran Church

What Questions do you have for God?

Luke 20:27-38

Karl Barth, the great 20th Century theologian, once said: "The Bible gives to every [person] and to every era answers to their questions as they deserve. We shall always find in it as much as we seek and no more." Do we use our questions to keep Jesus at arms' length? Do we only seek to play Trivial Pursuit? Are we afraid of encountering the living Christ because we really don't want him in our lives?

It's clear in the gospel of Luke 20:27-38 that Jesus has no time for those who merely want to play games. He has no patience with those who merely want to trick him or to use him to prove how smart or righteous or perfect they are. Usually those who waste his time don't come off very well--indeed, after this exchange, Luke writes, "They no longer dared to ask him another question."

However, Jesus always has time for questions that are real. He always has time for those who are stringing pearls for heaven. Because the questions deep in our hearts are what lead us to be in relationship with God.

Jesus always has time for questions like this:

- Can you heal my child?
- I have a demon that torments me and I can find no rest. Can you help me?
- I have lost my way to the circle of life. Can you bring me back?
- No one will come near me--because they say I am unclean. Do you love someone like me?

When people offer these questions to Jesus, the answer he gives is not a slogan or a sound bite. The answer he gives is himself. When the Sadducees or the Pharisees ask Jesus their trick questions, they usually get parables: stories that will puzzle their minds and invite them to look at the world in a new way. But when women and men bring Jesus their deepest yearnings, he doesn't talk to them; he engages them. When genuine people come to him with genuine questions, he often doesn't say anything, but he touches, he encounters, he relates. He invites people to journey with him on the Way.

The Latin root of the word "question" means "to seek." It's where we get the word "quest." To ask a real question is to enter on a journey; it's to begin traveling on The Way. Jesus gets exasperated with the Sadducees simply because they aren't willing to leave the station. They just want to play games and stay right where they are. They aren't right or wrong; they are just wasting their life.

Remember Rainer Maria Rilke's Letters to a Young Poet? An aspiring poet from America wrote the famous poet Rilke in Germany with questions about his art. In one of his replies, Rilke writes, "Love the

questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language....Live the questions now. Perhaps then someday far in the future, you will gradually...live your way into the answer."

Our deepest questions don't have simple answers. Instead they are doors to walk through. Jesus says, "I am the Way" because with him and through him we live our way into answers.

So let us take heart. Today is the day Jesus has come to the city; today is the day Jesus has come to our city. The time is short, but it is our time. Time to bring our deepest questions to Him--the questions for which we want a new answer, like:

- Does God love me?
- Are we alone?
- Can people find peace?

The Sadducees cannot ask these questions because they think they already know the answers. Real questions are doorways to the journey to newness. We ask Jesus these questions because he is who he is. Jesus is the door to newness; he is the Way to new life. He invites us to think of a new world: a world where the old rules do not apply. He invites the Sadducees to lay aside their stupid questions and think of a new world in which the living and the dead are connected.

So now is the time. Do not think about what we can do but about what God can do. Remember what he said? Ask and you will receive. How can we receive if we never ask? What questions do you have for God? Ask him, and you will receive. Amen.

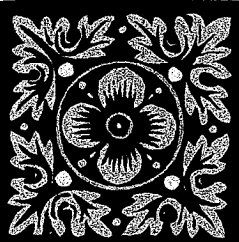
Submitted by,

Pastor Royan Rodney

### **Recovering Soldier Christmas Card Project**

When you write your Christmas cards this year, please include one for those wonderful, special people who have sacrificed so much for our country. Such a simple act can make a profound difference and as you write your card, pray for the recipient. Please send it to:

A Recovering American Soldier  
c/o Walter Reed Army Medical Center  
6900 Georgia Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20307-5001



# St. Mark's Lutheran Church

## Committees:

### Christian Education/Youth:

The youth will be having a fundraiser at the Miracle on Main Street Friday December 13 beginning at 5:30. Please make 2 dozen Christmas cookies.

On December 14 from 6:30 - 8:00 the youth will be having a Christmas party. Join us for some fun games and of course food! Bring a friend with you.

### Property:

Work is complete on the painting of the sanctuary. Thanks to all that donated towards the paint or helped to do the painting. It looks absolutely beautiful. Work has begun on shoring up the cellar walls after being damaged by the flood. Volunteers from SALT are assisting with this work.

## Servers for Dec

### December 1:

Acolyte - Gabby/Breanna  
Ushers - Tom/Sharon  
Reader - Deb P.  
Greeter - Maurice  
Prayer - Ginny  
Counter - Deb

### December 8:

Acolyte - Morgan/Kaleb  
Ushers - John/Gabby  
Reader - Ted  
Greeter - Ginny  
Prayer - Chris  
Counter - Diane

### December 15:

Acolyte - Jenna/Hannah  
Ushers - Bill/Bonnie  
Reader - Georgia  
Greeter - Janet  
Prayer - Gene  
Counter - Deb

### December 22:

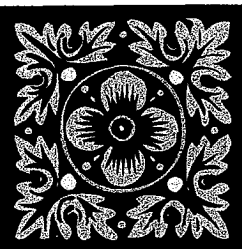
Acolyte - Brianna/Logan  
Ushers - Denise/Kaleb  
Reader - Ginny  
Greeter - Jessica  
Prayer - Beth  
Counter - Diane

### December 24:

Acolyte - Hannah/Kaleb  
Ushers - Dennis/Diane  
Reader - Marie  
Greeter - Deb P.  
Prayer - Georgia  
Counter - Deb

### December 29:

Acolyte - Mary/Breanna  
Ushers - Maurice/Ginny  
Reader - Jim



# St. Mark's Lutheran Church

## Happy Days !!!!!

### **Birthdays: December**

Dec 1 - Terry Minton  
Dec 5 - Edna Lower  
Dec 11 - Deb Palmatier  
Dec 12- Erin Becker  
Dec 13 - Niles McCoy  
Dec 15 - Gene Wyckoff  
Dec 16 - Freya Karsch  
Dec 18 - Ellen Langenbahn  
Dec 20 - Cody Whittaker  
Dec 21 - Melissa Cater  
Dec 25 - Marilyn Hanley  
Dec 29 - Doris Van Dyke  
Dec 31 - Todd Bartholomew

### **Anniversaries: December**

Dec 1 - Mary and Jerry Bowman  
Dec 17 - Pat and Ralph Becker  
Dec 19 - Kathy and Augie Kauffman  
Dec 28 - Bonnie and Bill Morton  
Dec 31 - Sharon and Harry  
Amendola

## **Upcoming Youth Events:**

Dec 13 - Fundraiser @ Miracle on  
Main Street 5:30 PM - ??

Dec 14 - Christmas party 6:30 - 8:00

See flyers in the hallway for more  
details and sign up for 2014 activities.

## **Wings as Eagles Gift Card Project**

Pastors Lori and Gary shared with us during their recent visit at St. Mark's that the children on the reservation no longer receive Christmas boxes from Operation Christmas Child. It's not too late for us to help the children receive Christmas gifts. The Pastors have indicated that they can do the shopping for us so we are asking you to please pick up a Walmart gift card in any amount when you are shopping. We will collect them from November 24 through December 8 to send to WAEM. Should you decide to send your gift cards separately, their address is:

Wings as Eagles Ministries  
P.O. Box 207  
Caputa, SD 57725

# **Upcoming Youth Events**

**Friday December 13 5:30 - ???**

## **Miracle on Main Street Fundraiser**

**Please bake 2 dozen Christmas cookies and bring them to church Friday night. Mrs. Minton will be in charge and Kaleb, Kenny and Marilyn have signed up to help.**

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## **Christmas Party**

**Saturday December 14 6:30 – 8:00**

**Bring a friend!**

**Join us for food and fun!!!!**



## St. Mark's Lutheran Church

*A brother and sister had made their usual hurried, obligatory pre-Christmas visit to the little farm where dwelt their elderly parents with their small herd of horses. The farm was where they had grown up and had been named Lone Pine Farm because of the huge pine, which topped the hill behind the farm. Through the years the tree had become a talisman to the old man and his wife, and a landmark in the countryside. The young siblings had fond memories of their childhood here, but the city hustle and bustle added more excitement to their lives, and called them away to a different life.*

*The old folks no longer showed their horses, for the years had taken their toll, and getting out to the barn on those frosty mornings was getting harder, but it gave them a reason to get up in the mornings and a reason to live. They sold a few foals each year, and the horses were their reason for joy in the morning and contentment at day's end.*

*Angry, as they prepared to leave, the young couple confronted the old folks "Why do you not at least dispose of 'The Old One'. She is no longer of use to you. It's been years since you've had foals from her. You should cut corners and save so you can have more for yourselves. How can this old worn out horse bring you anything but expense and work? Why do you keep her anyway?"*

*The old man looked down at his worn boots, holes in the toes, scuffed at the barn floor and replied, " Yes, I could use a pair*

*of new boots".*

*His arm slid defensively about the Old One's neck as he drew her near with gentle caressing he rubbed her softly behind her ears. He replied softly, "We keep her because of love. Nothing else, just love."*

*Baffled and irritated, the young folks wished the old man and his wife a Merry Christmas and headed back toward the city as darkness stole through the valley.*

*The old couple shook their heads in sorrow that it had not been a happy visit. A tear fell upon their cheeks. How is it that these young folks do not understand the peace of the love that filled their hearts?*

*So it was, that because of the unhappy leave-taking, no one noticed the insulation smoldering on the frayed wires in the old barn. None saw the first spark fall. None but the "Old One".*

*In a matter of minutes, the whole barn was ablaze and the hungry flames were licking at the loft full of hay. With a cry of horror and despair, the old man shouted to his wife to call for help as he raced to the barn to save their beloved horses. But the flames were roaring now, and the blazing heat drove him back. He sank sobbing to the ground, helpless before the fire's fury. His wife back from calling for help cradled him in her arms, clinging to each other, they wept at their loss.*

*By the time the fire department arrived, only smoking, glowing ruins were left, and the old man and his wife, exhausted from their grief, huddled together before the barn. They were speechless as they rose from the cold snow covered ground. They nodded thanks to the firemen as there was nothing anyone could do now. The old man turned to his wife, resting her white head upon his shoulders as his shaking old hands clumsily dried her tears with a frayed red bandana. Brokenly he whispered, "We have lost much, but God has spared our*



*home on this eve of Christmas. Let us gather strength and climb the hill to the old pine where we have sought comfort in times of despair. We will look down upon our home and give thanks to God that it has been spared and pray for our beloved most precious gifts that have been taken from us.*

*And so, he took her by the hand and slowly helped her up the snowy hill as he brushed aside his own tears with the back of his old and withered hand.*

*The journey up the hill was hard for their old bodies in the steep snow. As they stepped over the little knoll at the crest of the hill, they paused to rest, looking up to the top of the hill the old couple gasped and fell to their knees in amazement at the incredible beauty before them.*

*Seemingly, every glorious, brilliant star in the heavens was caught up in the glittering, snow-frosted branches of their beloved pine, and it was aglow with heavenly candles. And poised on its top most bough, a crystal crescent moon glistened like spun glass. Never had a mere mortal created a Christmas tree such as this. They were breathless as the old man held his wife tighter in his arms.*

*Suddenly, the old man gave a cry of wonder and incredible joy. Amazed and mystified, he took his wife by the hand and pulled her forward. There, beneath the tree, in resplendent glory, a mist hovering over and glowing in the darkness was their Christmas gift. Shadows glistening in the night light.*

*Bedded down about the "Old one" close to the trunk of the tree, was the entire herd, safe.*

*At the first hint of smoke, she had pushed the door ajar with her muzzle and had led the horses through it. Slowly and with great dignity, never looking back, she had led them up the hill, stepping*

***cautiously through the snow. The foals were frightened and dashed about. The skittish yearlings looked back at the crackling, hungry flames, and tucked their tails under them as they licked their lips and hopped like rabbits. The mares that were in foal with a new years crop of babies, pressed uneasily against the "Old One" as she moved calmly up the hill and to safety beneath the pine. And now she lay among them and gazed at the faces of the old man and his wife.***

***Those she loved she had not disappointed. Her body was brittle with years, tired from the climb, but the golden eyes were filled with devotion as she offered her gift—  
Because of love. Only Because of love.***

***Tears flowed as the old couple shouted their praise and joy... And again the peace of love filled their hearts.***

## Christmas Greetings

It's Christmastime; the church bells chime;  
There's gladness everywhere;  
Children sing and sleigh bells ring;  
There's laughter in the air.

As carols are sung, and stockings hung,  
We trim the Christmas tree;  
Gifts are exchanged, and rearranged,  
Midst happiness and glee.

As joy abounds, we hear the sounds  
Of gladness, love, and cheer;  
Be sure you send, to every friend,  
Good wishes for the year.

On Christmas Morn, our Lord was born;  
We celebrate His birth;  
So, let us share a common prayer  
For lasting peace on earth.

- Billie McCoy

***May God grant you His peace that passes understanding as we  
celebrate the blessed birth of our Lord and Savior this Christmas!***