



MARKER

ST. MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

JANUARY 2012

3051 Putnam Blvd. Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

(925)934-6114 • www.sm-lc.net • officeadmin@sm-lc.net

LOOKING TOWARDS A NEW YEAR

- Pastor Barnes

Marker Article January 2012

"Longing is the beginning of everything." Nelly Sachs

And another year has passed. We are at the threshold of the new year, and we don't know what to expect as we step across. There is a fullness of opportunities – but maybe there is fear as well.

I sometimes wonder why we tend to stop and ponder the old and the new around December 31. Why not at any other given day during the year? What makes the passage into a new year (which, after all, is nothing more than the passage into another day) so special?

It seems human beings need special days for commemoration and celebration, milestones along the often quite monotonous path of life. From ancient days, humans have tried to order their days and seasons; they have watched the courses of the sun, moon, and the stars. They have observed the cycles of nature and the change of the seasons. And each culture has had their special times, holy days, set aside, to give thanks, to remember, and to prepare in some way for the future.

Today we still have holidays; we celebrate birthdays and anniversaries; we observe days of somber remembrance. It is good to have these times, times set apart from other times. I would like to call these times sacred times; times when we realize we are on holy ground, and not just stuck in the rut.

And so, as we are about to enter a new year, we may have come to such a sacred time and holy space. It is still Christmas. God is with us, born among us, and promises to be with us till the end of the days. What do we do with this promise at the threshold of the year 2012?

"Longing is the beginning of everything," writes Nelly Sachs, a German Jew who barely escaped the horrors of concentration camp in Nazi Germany. Longing is much more than wanting or wishing; longing is that genuine feeling from deep inside, a (sometimes slowly) burning desire. This longing, says Sachs, is the beginning of everything.

So instead of grappling with resolutions you proba-

bly will abandon anyway as the year becomes older, and as you fall back into your routine, why not explore: what do you long for, deep inside? What are your desires, for your family, and for yourself? Do you long for more peace of mind? Do you long for more stability, for reconnection or reconciliation? Do you long for a feeling of health and wholeness?

What are you longing for regarding the community you live in – work, school, the world? Is your longing for less conflict and more peace? Do you long for justice and an end to hunger and homelessness?

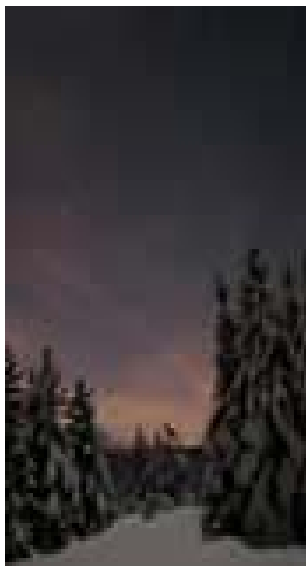
What do you long for at St. Mark's? Would you like to see more people in worship, do you long for a deeper spiritual life and connection with God?

I personally don't believe in the 'power of positive thinking' (in the sense that, if you just believe strongly enough that something will happen, it will happen for you); however, I believe that searching our hearts for what we desire, and visualizing what it would look like if we had what we long for, are an important first step to get where we want to be. Longing is the beginning of everything. Longing leads to a vision, and a vision gives us guidance for how to get there.

And so, as we are standing on the holy ground, which leads us into a new year, I wish for all of you, that you may discover that longing deep inside you. May God help you as you follow your longing. May God be with you, at the doorstep from one day to the next, at the doorstep from one year to the next.

"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace." Numbers 6:24-26

Pastor Kerstin





CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

All voting members are invited to come to St. Mark's ANNUAL MEETING on **Sunday, 1/22 @ 9:45 am**, between services. We will elect new council officers and discuss reports from the pastor, the council, and committees.

Thank you for your thoughts, prayers, cards and words of comfort on the loss of my mother. She was 97 years old and died in her sleep. We thank God that she did not suffer. She was a very special person and we will miss her very much.

Women's Bible Studies

W-ELCA: Martha Circle – Tuesday, January 10, 2012

Please join us in the meeting room at church at 1:30 p.m.
All are welcome!

We will continue the study with the Book of Mark.

In the first 7 chapters of Mark's Gospel much has been revealed about Jesus' identity. We have also witnessed a variety of responses to his preaching, teaching, and healing. Some have sought out Jesus and others have resisted him at every turn.

What do you think of this one "who has done everything well" (7:37)? That will be the crucial question in the next session.



Bible study leader: Jan C.

Refreshments: Compl

Moms' Bible Study:

"Younger Moms' Bible Study" group is meeting this Winter!

Contact Pastor Kerstin if you are interested in attending. It is generally the 4th Tuesday of each month, but plans are **only** solidified for the next date, time, and place at the prior meeting. Definitely contact Pastor Kerstin if you are interested in attending!

We hope to see you there!

Contact Pastor Kerstin if you have any questions.

Social Ministry: January Outreach



San Francisco Night Ministry

The San Francisco Night Ministry provides nightly compassionate non-judgmental counseling for anyone in crisis or distress by ordained clergy on the streets. Trained volunteers are available to answer telephones throughout the nights from 10:00pm until 4:00am.

The Night Ministry also provides an open-air worship service with Holy Communion at 2:00pm in the City, everyone is welcome.

Pastor Lyle Beckman, the Night Minister, will visit our congregation on January 15th. He will facilitate our Forum at 9:45am and present Temple Talks during the worship hours. Please come to the Forum and learn more about this vital ministry. If you chose to support this effort to the less fortunate, consider a monetary donation. Issue your check to St. Mark's, designate 'Night Ministry'. Another way of help is to bring warm coats, scarves, hats, and/or gloves to church by January 15th. These items will then be distributed to those who have no homes and depend on fellow human beings just to stay alive.

Thank you!

A heartfelt thanks to all who supported December's outreach!

Also, special gratitude goes to Linda and Sophie D. who graciously spearheaded the 'Adopt-a Family' program.

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Save the Date:

Saturday Feb 18: Mardi Gras/Fasching Celebration

- 5:30 pm Service
- 6pm Potluck
- 7pm Talent Show

St. Mark's Women's Retreat

Life - A Maze or a Labyrinth?

Friday, March 2, through Sunday, March 4
Lafayette Ridge

All women are invited to attend our third annual women's retreat. This year, it will be held in a gorgeous vacation rental in Lafayette, which offers a private sauna and hot tub.

Come for the whole weekend, or come for a day. Enjoy renewal of body, mind, and spirit.

Projected cost for two night stay, including meals: \$200

Projected cost for Saturday day retreat: \$40, including breakfast and lunch.
Scholarships will be available.

For more information, or to register, please contact Pastor Kerstin at pastorkerstin@gmail.com



High Tea

Sunday, January 22 4 p.m.

*Hosted by the ladies of the 'Younger Moms' Study'
Come for tea and delectable delicacies and enjoy sophisticated conversations.*

Dress-up and hats optional.

All proceeds will go to the Women's Retreat scholarship fund

Pastor's Report: December

Pastor Kerstin Barnes

Sanctuary Beautification: The first phase of the sanctuary beautification has been completed. Pews have been restored and upholstered, some floor tiles replaced, the walls were painted, and the carpets cleaned (plus, Guy and Marilyn did a lot of clean-up work). The next project the Sanctuary Beautification Taskforce would like to take on (funds permitting) is the change of the altar wall.

Advent Season: During this Advent season, St. Mark's has offered mid-week prayers and studies on Wednesday nights and almost daily email devotions. Participation during the mid-week prayers has been rather low. Maybe we should consider combining our mid-week Advent services with another church in the coming year.

The St. Nicholas Service and Celebration on 12/3 were fun and well attended.

Parish Teaching Student: Cary preached his second sermon at St. Mark's on 12/11. It is a joy to see that he is getting more comfortable with preaching and worship leadership. Cary will be on break until about 1/7.

German Christmas Service: Trinity Lutheran Church will not offer its traditional German language Christmas service this year. Pastor Dave was kind enough to give me the database for past attendees of the German service. We sent out more than 100 invitations for our German service. I expect attendance to break 100 this year; maybe we will have as many as 150 German speaking visitors on Christmas Eve.

Office Transition: A Hiring Taskforce was commissioned to look for our next office administrator. We had about 130 applications for the position. The taskforce ended up interviewing 5 strong candidates. We hope to have the new office administrator start 1/2/12. Until then,



Karen Klingelhafer will continue to be the interim person in the office.

Restructuring of Mutual Ministry and Other Committees No meeting was held, but we were able to clarify a few things. Our constitution merely says that we ought to have a Mutual Ministry Committee. The St. Mark's bylaws define the role and tasks of the Mutual Ministry Committee. So we don't have to change the constitution, but merely our bylaws regarding a redefinition of the role of Mutual Ministry.

New Member Requests: The Waite Family (Ken, Claudia, and Kendrick), who was requesting membership, had to move away.

Baptism: On 1/29, we will welcome Adam Grage into the family of God.

Upcoming Special Service: Sunday, 1/1: New Year's Day; ONE SERVICE at 10 a.m.; Bernie Fricke will be the guest preacher

Upcoming Events: Sunday, 1/22, between services: Congregational Meeting Part II

Sunday, 1/22, 4 p.m.: High Tea Fundraiser for 'Younger Moms' Study Group

From the Council

You, the congregation, need Council Members!

The council would ideally be the maximum 12 people plus Pastor, but we are currently only at 8, and in addition to people moving, three more council members will be completing their three-year terms this year. That means council will have 7 positions available starting 2012.

Please prayerfully consider serving in this extremely rewarding role. We absolutely could not represent the congregation well without representation from the whole congregation. Please contact pastor or any council member if you have any questions at all.

Thank you!

Alan Klingelhafer, Council President

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

Council Minutes (without Pastor's report)

November 13, 2011

In Attendance: Marian Bachofer, Pastor Kerstin Barnes, Laura Bathel, Adam Damerel, Lisa Farnitano, Alan Klingelhafer, Brian Marrs, Sue Short and Don Stapleton.

Absent: Chris Bowman

Called to order @ 12:00PM

Devotions: Alan led us in devotions.

October Minutes: Reviewed and approved.

Treasurer's Report: "The first Sunday in November was really good." Budget discussion ensued.

Updates/Status:

Spirit/Mind/Body: Was discussed in Worship & Praise. We have guidelines and recommendations.

Sanctuary Beautification Task Force: Moving along and funded.

Office Staff: We have ads with the Synod and Pleasant Hill Faith Community. We have already received résumés.

Ideas for Committee Communication: Example from St. John's in Antioch.

Mutual Ministry Charter: Brief discussion.

How to Handle Overage/Underage and End of Year: Discussion of this topic was combined with discussion of the Endowment Fund. Finance Committee should take a look at it, but committee needs to provide more leadership to the Treasurer and get input from the council and the congregation.

How to Fund Directories? Idea that some be distributed electronically (PDF format).

Recruiting New Council Members. No one has volunteered.

Committee Reports:

Finance: Everyone needs to look at budget changes and take appropriate action.

CCC: Needs to meet.

Fellowship: Needs new leadership.

Social Ministry: Blanket appeal raised \$605.00. Bay Area Rescue Mission got good response. December's focus is the Food Bank.

Stewardship: Pastor is putting together a team.

Worship & Music: Met on November 7 and discussed Advent activities.

Youth: Discussion of best day/time for Bible Study.

Upcoming Meetings:

Next meeting scheduled for December 18 at 12pm. January Council meeting: Jan. 8, Congregational Meeting Jan. 22.

Meeting Adjourned: The meeting was adjourned at 1:35 pm.

Closing Prayer: We all joined in The Lord's Prayer

Next Meeting's Snacks and Devotions: Brian Marrs

Submitted by: *Brian Marrs*, Secretary

Body, Mind, Spirit Forums in September

The St. Mark's spiritual growth (or Passionate Spirituality) task force held two forums in September to get a better idea of what we do well, what we can improve at St. Mark's and how we grow spiritually. The idea being that once we figure out how we grow spiritually, we'll be able to provide more opportunities for growth. There will be more about this in the annual report. -Karen K on behalf of Body, Mind Spirit

Learning Opportunities

Current

Pastor's Class Wed evenings
 Mom's Group Last Tue 9-11
 Martha's Circle 1st Tue 1:30-3:30
 Confirmation two Sat/month 12-2
 Sunday School ages 3-2nd grade
 Retreats, Moms and WELCA
 Forums

Ideas

Jr/Sr high starting soon
 Saturday Mornings once a month - Women
 Facebook
 Marker articles
 Saturday Mens breakfast combine with property day?
 Combine with other nearby churches
 Intergenerational
 Get Men together to discuss what they would like

What is working/has worked at St. Marks?

Women's Bible Studies
 Confirmation
 Stations of the cross as a family
 Social
 Sharing of the peace at the end of 2nd service

Not working/need improvement?

Not including everyone in women's studies (i.e. working women)
 Youth not staying after confirmation
 Not doing regular intergenerational activities
 Bringing into the fold
 Burnout of volunteers
 Development of Lay leadership
 Need better defined volunteer commitment

What are you excited about at St. Mark's?

Music
 Coming to worship
 Meeting new people, welcoming attitude, friendly, warm
 Continuing friendships with each other
 Bible study – Mom's, WELCA, Pastor's
 New facility improvements – AC, New pews, paint
 Returning visitors
 2nd service, excitement in the air
 Sermon
 Heard Pastor speak in community
 Young kids at 2nd service
 Being a part of 2nd service

How do/have you grow(n) spiritually?

Bible study – serves as a grounding – Why you believe what you believe
 Group things about prayer
 Lectio Davina - meditative reading of Scripture
 Interfacing with others, continual growth process
 Applying Biblical principles to life
 Balance
 Hearing people's stories, their mental process for getting there, unintentional spiritual mentoring
 Lent/Advent services that focus on spirituality
 Daily quiet reflection
 Dialog at Sunday dinner – connect sermon to life

What ways do you integrate faith into life?

Interfacing with others, meeting God through them
 Integrity of faith – you are who you say you are
 Communicating that God is important to me through words and actions
 Not judging, being real, truly listening
 I go to church because I know I need help
 Let people know that Christians aren't perfect, we still struggle, share how faith helped in struggles
 Respect differences among faiths
 Share our struggles with our church community and the regular community
 Be an example, help others

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(925)934-6114 • www.sm-lc.net • officeadmin@sm-lc.net
Pastor Kerstin Barnes: (925)330-2289 pastorkerstin@gmail.com

Church Staff

Pastor: Kerstin Barnes
Office Administrator:

Directors of 2nd Service Music/Worship & Music Chair: Sherry & Mike Doyle
Choir Director: Derrick Clark
Organist: Shu Hwei Peng
Pianist: Lisa Farnitano
Parish Teaching Student: Cary Bass

Officers & Council Members

Alan Klingelhafer	President
Laura Bathel	Vice President
Brian Marrs	Secretary
Lisa Farnitano	Treasurer
Judy Brown	Financial Secretary
Sue Short	Adam Damerel
Marian Bachofer	Chris Bowman
Don Stapleton	



We are the Body of Christ, called to bear the Good News of God's reign of love and justice in our words and deeds.