

Memos



January, 2008

Loving God—Serving Others

St. Mark Evangelical
Lutheran Church

PASTOR'S CORNER

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday

8:00 A.M. Traditional
9:30 & 10:45 A.M. Contemporary

OPPORTUNITIES

Sunday

Sunday School 9:30 A.M.
LYO meets bi-weekly 5:00 P.M.

Monday

Karate Fellowship Hall 6:00 P.M.

Tuesday

Rockers (55+) 2nd & 4th Tues 1:00 P.M.
Praise Hymn Rehearsal 7:00 P.M.

Wednesday

Adult Bible Study 9:30-11:30 A.M.
Confirmation Class 7:00-8:15 P.M.
A.A.—Heaney Hall 7:30 P.M.
Karate—Fellowship Hall 6:00 P.M.

Thursday

Bookfinders—2nd Thurs. 10:30 A.M.
Piecemaker Quilters 9:30 A.M.
Council - 2nd Thursday of the month

Friday

PADS 7:00 A.M.-7:P.M.
(October-April)
Karate—Fellowship Hall 6:00 P.M.

Dear Friends in Christ,

I want to begin this new year which is now only hours old, by thanking you for your friendship, for your encouragement, and for your ministry. Thank you so much for the many gifts of love my family and I have received this Christmas time. We very much appreciate your kindness and your generosity. Thank you to those of you who helped to make "A Birthday Party for Jesus" a reality. Thank you too, to those of you who shared both your musical gift and your precious time in a very busy season, to give "The Gift" of a beautiful cantata the Sunday before Christmas. I have heard so many positive comments from people whose hearts were moved by your music. Thank you to all of you who served as ushers, greeters, host/hostesses, in the altar guild, in Praise Hymn, as readers, communion assistants, offering counters, those who staffed the divine dollars table, those who moved the snow, those who vacuumed the sanctuary, and everyone who made our worship possible at Christmas and throughout the year. It is a privilege to serve with you.

Finally I want to thank you for your concern and prayers for my mother. She is in a nursing home in northern Minnesota recovering from a fall. We spent a of couple days with her this week, and she is doing well in her therapy and hopes to return to a new living situation in a few weeks. Please keep her in your prayers.

Having spent some time with my Mom in the nursing home reminded me of a story by Kent Nerburn called "The Cab." It has the ring of truth to it. I like it because it shows what a difference the compassion of one person can make in another person's life. I hope you enjoy it.

"Twenty years ago, I drove a cab for a living. Because I drove the night shift, my cab became a confessional. Passengers climbed in, sat behind me in total anonymity, and told me about their lives. I encountered people whose lives amazed me, ennobled me, made me laugh and weep. But none touched me more than a woman I picked up late one August night. I was responding to a call from a small brick four-plex in a quiet part of town. I assumed I was being sent to pick up some partiers, or someone who had just had a fight with a lover, or a worker heading to an early shift at some factory from the industrial part of town.



When I arrived at 2:30 a.m., the building was dark except for a single light in a ground floor window.

Under these circumstances, many drivers would just honk once or twice, wait a minute, and then drive away. But I had seen too many impoverished people who depended on taxis as their only means of transportation. Unless a situation smelled of danger, I always went to the door. This passenger might be someone who needs my assistance, I reasoned to myself. So I walked to the door and knocked. "Just a minute", answered a frail, elderly voice. I could hear something being dragged across the floor. After a long pause, the door opened.

A small woman in her 80s stood before me. She was wearing a print dress and a pillbox hat with a veil pinned on it, like somebody out of a 1940s movie. By her side was a small nylon suitcase. The apartment looked as if no one had lived in it for years. All the furniture was covered with sheets. There were no clocks on the walls, no knick-knacks or utensils on the counters. In the corner was a cardboard box filled with photos and glassware.

"Would you carry my bag out to the car?" she said. I took the suitcase to the cab, and then returned to assist the woman. She took my arm and we walked slowly toward the curb. She kept thanking me for my kindness. "It's nothing", I told her. "I just try to treat my passengers the way you would want my mother treated".

"Oh, you're such a good boy", she said. When we got in the cab, she gave me an address, and then asked, "Could you drive through downtown?" "It's not the shortest way," I answered quickly. "Oh, I don't mind," she said. "I'm in no hurry. I'm on my way to a hospice." I looked in the rearview mirror. Her eyes were glistening. "I don't have any family left," she continued. "The doctor says I don't have very long."

I quietly reached over and shut off the meter. "What route would you like me to take?" I asked. For the next two hours, we drove through the city. She showed me the building where she had once worked as an elevator operator. We drove through the neighborhood where she and her husband had lived when they were newlyweds. She had me pull up in front of a furniture warehouse that had once been a ballroom where she had gone dancing as a girl.

Sometimes she'd ask me to slow in front of a particular building or corner and would sit staring into the darkness, saying nothing. As the first hint of sun was creasing the horizon, she suddenly said, "I'm tired. Let's go now."

We drove in silence to the address she had given me. It was a low building, like a small convalescent home, with a driveway that passed under a portico. Two orderlies came out to the cab as soon as we pulled up. They were solicitous and intent, watching her every move. They must have been expecting her. I opened the trunk and took the small suitcase to the door. The woman was already seated in a wheelchair.

"How much do I owe you?" she asked, reaching into her purse. "Nothing," I said. "You have to make a living," she answered. "There are other passengers," I responded. Almost without thinking, I bent and gave her a hug. She held onto me tightly. "You gave an old woman a little moment of joy," she said, "Thank you." I squeezed her hand, and then walked into the dim morning light. Behind me a door shut. It was the sound of the closing of a life.

I didn't pick up any more passengers that shift. I drove aimlessly, lost in thought. For the rest of that day, I could hardly talk. What if that woman had gotten an angry driver, or one who was impatient to end his shift?

What if I had refused to take the run, or had honked once, then driven away? On a quick review, I don't think that I have done anything more important in my life. We're conditioned to think that lives revolve around great moments. But great moments often catch us unaware-beautifully wrapped in what others may consider a small one."

Your brother in Christ,

Pastor Jay

**The King will reply, "I tell you the truth,
whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine,
you did for me." Matt. 25:40**

Conversing with God: prayer for everyday living

Yes, yes, I know...some people say *PRAYER* is mystical and really works, while others say it's boring and that they don't have time. I think *PRAYER* is as simple as a conversation between two people, You and God. It's a conversation that doesn't require money and can be useful in all sorts of situations. But this holy conversation isn't just talking, it can be fun and exciting, emotionally moving and silencing. This month, I will be leading a 6 week session on *PRAYER* and different ways of doing it. We will learn how to meditate in *PRAYER*, how to pray using art and writing, and how to bless each other through anointing. The class will also take time to focus on centering *PRAYER*, which in this fast-paced world we live in is a nice retreat! Feel free to join the class from **4:30-5:30 on Sundays, Jan 13 - Feb 17.**

“To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.” –Martin Luther King, Jr.



And speaking of prayer:

Let us pray . . .

For the sick including Ken Gibson, Faith Idzik, Martha Weber, Katie Oberbeck, Claudia Manzello, Diane Kuczera, Crystal Kuk, Lillian Kirpec, Debbie Bartosik, Hazel Trygstad, Dr. Dave Calandra, Ann Starr, the Woike, Dan Wenk, Iris Bullion, Bishop Mark Hansen, and Bishop Wayne N. Miller.

For the homebound including Laurretta Brinkman, James Nichols, Lorraine Roshnagel, Fred Dietrich, Donna Gutierrez, Wally Huscher, Marie Augito, Dorothy Gavens, Bob Floral, Bonnie Stoffregen, Diane Anetsberger and Jean Neubauer.

For those serving in the military including Andrew Elsner, Christopher Freitag, Luke Bialcyk, Alvin Dixon, and Ron Brasel.

And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. Isaiah 65:24

Please remember to pray also for our new and re-elected Church Council Members:

President	Bruce Shake	Missions	Suzanne Noonan
Vice-President	Suzanne Noonan	Policy & Procedure	Greg Ries
Secretary	Carol Norton	Stewardship/Financial	Carol Norton
Treasurer	Gene Meyers	Worship	Debbie Sernus
Building & Grounds	Bob Haller	<i>The positions of <u>Evangelism</u>, <u>Long Range Planning</u>, <u>Social</u></i>	
Christian Education	Nancy Wojcik	<i><u>Ministry</u>, and <u>Youth</u> are vacant. If you would like to learn more</i>	
Fellowship	Margie McCarthy	<i>about these opportunities for serving please contact Pastor Jay or Bruce Shake.</i>	

THE VICAR'S VOICE

by Vicar Justin Eller

Before I came to St. Mark, I did pastoral care with elderly adults at various stages of Alzheimer's and dementia. Over my time ministering with them, I realized that memory is a very important aspect of our culture and it has been since the beginning of humankind. Stories we tell remind us of where we've come from, where we are now, and where we're going. Memory and stories are essential in the life of a congregation and I believe remembering is holy, even sacramental. It's often tough to feel God working in the lives of family and friends who forget. Perhaps it's even harder to experience God through the blessed frustration that comes with caring for others who forget. I have been asked to reflect on memory and stories through a series of *Vicar's Voice* articles in the Memo's. This month will begin the installment reflecting on various types of memory and their holiness. As always, if you have any questions or would like to further discuss any *Vicar's Voice* themes, my door is always open.



***Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' He replied, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'* – Luke 23:42-43**

***"This I do in quiet ways, that on your lonely path, you may not walk alone."* – Howard Thurman**

A Christ-centered understanding of memory can be taken from the memory of God through Jesus Christ. Jesus used memory in a way that honored those around him. Through his invitation to remember him every time we take communion, Jesus sets up memory that goes beyond time, space, and all human understanding. He used memory to remind us that in our daily trials and even on our death beds we will be remembered.

As the hour of Jesus' death came, he understood human memory and its limits first hand. When the cries for remembrance pierced the ear of God, the grace-filled exchange between Jesus and the criminal on the cross is better understood. In Luke 23:42-43 one of the criminals pleads for Jesus to remember him when entering into his kingdom and Jesus reassures the convict that he will be with him in Paradise. Jesus' reassurance crossed their time into a promise of memory in the next life. Christ here takes with him divine memory into the kingdom of God. When we confess that God remembers, we affirm that God is faithful in the promises that have been made with God's people throughout time.

It's also noticed that Jesus' disoriented cry in Matthew 27.46, "...My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" is an interweaving of God's divine memory and Jesus' human memory, which are one. This blending of memories brings to mind a sense of God feeling forgotten, a terrifying abandonment on the cross. God identifies with us when we begin to forget, feeling isolated from the world and abandoned by friends and family. Effects of Alzheimer's and dementia can leave elderly adults crying out in the same way Jesus cried out from the cross. Their inability to remember is a type of crucifixion that can lead to a slow, agonizing death. However, Jesus' experience of feeling forgotten can reassure those of us who transition from middle-stage Alzheimer's to end-stage that Jesus is with us, that Jesus understands what we experience, and that Jesus remembers us in his resurrection. Jesus felt forgotten on the cross and yet was remembered in the same moment. When God's faithfulness in memory is proclaimed, God's sustaining love is lifted up and God's presence is remembered.

Merciful God, as we forget and care for those who forget, may you lift us up as one body, whole, to see you face-to-face and feel your eternal loving embrace. In Jesus name, Amen.

Thank you, Thank you, Thank you!

Dear St. Mark Family,

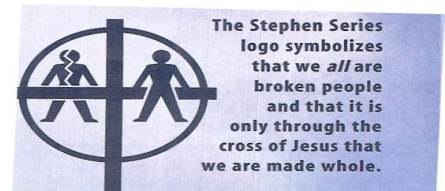
It warms our hearts to know that we have such special people as you all in our lives. We would like to thank you for all your gifts, love, and support that we have received! We feel extremely blessed to be able to journey with you this year. This truly is a place where God is present and the Holy Spirit is vibrantly working. May God continue to bless you all with a happy and safe New Year!

Yours in Christ,

Vicar Justin and Kari Eller

STEPHEN MINISTRY

Christ Caring for People through People



A new Stephen Ministry Class is beginning. This month begins a new class of Stephen Minister training. As many of you know, Stephen Ministry is one-on-one caring ministry for those who are going through stressful or discouraging time in their lives. Stephen Ministers meet with their care receiver once a week for one hour. They do not attempt to do psychotherapy, nor will they pretend to solve all your problems. They are there to care, to listen, to encourage, and to pray for people going through tough times. Training for Stephen Ministry involves 50 hours of training in caring and listening skills. If you think God has gifted you to be a part of this life giving ministry, or if you would like to hear more, please contact one of the leaders (Barry or Marilyn Garr, Marge Krause, Pastor Jay or Vicar Justin.)

LAURETTA BRINKMAN



This month we are profiling one of our shut-ins, Laurretta Brinkman. We pray for her each week but may not be aware of who she is or how she's doing now. Laurretta has belonged to St. Mark for the last 43 years. During this time she saw her children Jean and Pam confirmed, her daughter, Pam Giera, married, her grandson Michael Giera baptized, and her husband of over 50 years laid to rest. Laurretta has always been extremely faithful in her attendance here and taught Sunday School for a number of years. But she was also an active community member as well. While raising four children she also found the time and energy to be involved in the local PTA, the North Palos Fire Department Women's Auxiliary among other organizations and in later years was a dedicated volunteer at Palos Community Hospital. Additionally, she was a great party-giver and a wonderful wife, mother, daughter, sister and aunt. Her life is an example of Christian love and service. Laurretta has lost most of her vision and is suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Please pray for Laurretta, her family, friends, and caregivers as she makes her final preparations for her journey home. If you would like to drop her a line, her address is in the church directory.

ATTENTION 6TH GRADERS—HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH

Now that the holidays are over its time to get serious about LYO. We have many activities planned PLUS lots of room for more ideas. So bring your bodies and your brains to the next meeting Sunday, January 6th at 5:00 P.M. If you need a ride give me a call and maybe we can find someone to carpool with you. This Sunday will also be a game night so bring your favorite board game and a snack to share. If you need more info give me a call. Rich Otto: (708) 233-7379 (home) or (708) 828-9054 (cell). See you there!

P.A.D.S. needs you! If you have a few hours once a month and want to serve God and others here is your chance. People are needed for the later shifts especially 11-3; 3-7; and 5-7 A.M. Give Rich Otto a call if you can help or just want more information.



BOOK REVIEW. Need something to do on these cold winter nights? Consider reading a good book. Such as:

You! God's Brand-New Idea by Max Lucado. This is a compilation of writings from some of Max's other books that show how God loves the person you are and wants you to use your gifts and talents to honor Him. It reads fast and is overflowing with encouragement. This is the one to choose if you need a lift and don't have a lot of time.

Ten Prayers God Always Says Yes To by Anthony Destefano. This down-to-earth (if grammatically shaky) speaks to the need for communication with God and particularly God's communication with us. It also is an easy read and a great choice to coincide with Vicar Justin's class on prayer.

A Travel Guide to Heaven by the same author as above. Who hasn't wondered about our final destination? Will my family know me? What about my pets? Will I get to where wings and can mine be a bright red please? All these questions and more are asked and in most cases answered or at touched upon. What a fun, hopeful, and inspiring book to read and to share!

And finally, *A Redbird Christmas* by Fannie Flagg. The tale of a crusty, despairing old man and how his life changes when he moves from blustery Chicago to a small town in the south. Its funny and whimsical and thought-provoking without being cloying. Please give it a try. You will be blessed.

All of these items can be obtained from your local library and are usually available in different formats such as large type, CD, or paperback. If your library does not own them, the staff will be more than happy to request these materials from another library at no cost to you. Enjoy!

HAPPY NEW YEAR BIRTHDAY!

- 1 Traci Oblak
- 2 Greg Stefaniak
- 4 Nicholas Spence
- 5 April Carlson
- 7 Betty Witte
- 8 Esther Lopez
- 9 Theresa Leavitt, Robert Tobin
- 10 Marcy De Christopher, Brian Oleksy, Christian Duh
- 11 Erwin Brauer, Martha Weber, Edward Koschnitski
- 12 Sonia Muehlnickel
- 13 Gary Voitke, Tami Lontka
- 14 Ardelle O'Leary
- 15 Eleanor Peterson
- 17 Joshua Okrzesik
- 19 John Quadrizius, Gino Sepulveda
- 20 Andrew Sernus
- 23 Bertha Marco, Lari-Jo Meyers
- 24 Anthony Rubino, Ron Kleczkowski
- 25 Shirley Audas
- 27 Lloyd Snyder
- 28 Martin Sullivan, Ben Sullivan, Janelle Collier
- 29 Jason O'Boyle, Richard Gajeski
- 30 Kyle Ruger
- 31 Jillian Kiekow, Aidan Horan

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