



Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.

Psalm 98:1

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. ⁷ Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. ⁸ It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.

Proverbs 3:5-8



Devotional – “Heaven’s Highway”

Through my years not only as a pastor but also as an employee, as an employer and boss, as a son, as a husband, as a friend, and as an adversary, I have learned a lot about communicating effectively and powerfully. It’s been said in many different ways, and it is absolutely true, that the best communicators are the best listeners. Communicating effectively begins with understanding who it is you are trying to communicate with, and that requires listening. I have noticed that though not everyone thinks they are good at verbal communication or public speaking, most everyone assumes about themselves that they are a good listener. However, I have learned that effectively listening takes just as much effort and practice and is an art form equal in prowess to speaking.

When most people are preparing for a speech or attempting to communicate effectively, the predominant focus is on the words that will in fact be spoken, heard, written, and read. Whenever I hear a speaker that really impresses me, I have come to find that I am impressed equally by what the person did not say as much as I am impressed by what they did say and how they said it. I have come to learn the same is true about effective listening. To listen effectively, to really hear all that a person is telling you and writing to you, you have to listen to what has not been said or written just as intently and carefully as you do to what has been said or written.

Take verse 6 in our text from Proverbs 3, for example, written by wise King Solomon: “In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” There is something very important being said here, but it isn’t written down. Without saying it, Proverbs 3 just told us that the paths we have made for ourselves, the roads we have paved to go where we believe it is we should be, are not straight. They are crooked. Solomon didn’t say anything about the destination either. He said the Lord will make our crooked paths straight. This means that even if we have the right destination in mind, if we lean on our own understanding, as it says in verse 5, or if we pave a path for ourselves being wise only in our own eyes and not according to the wisdom of God, as it says in verse 7, not only might we be making our path crooked and more difficult than it has to be, but we may end up making our way so crooked it leads us toward evil and away from God.

A timely message for this time of year, wouldn’t you say? A time when we have a tendency to plan and begin to pave many paths for ourselves. In our sinful nature, however, evil is always where we tend to go. Even if drawing closer to God is our desired destination,

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JANUARY 2022 Edition

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according to our own wisdom and our own understanding we cannot help but go crooked. The only way our paths can be straightened is if they are made to be that way by the One who is the Beginning and End of all things.

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, who took on flesh, who walked straight and without wavering before God in our place, and who faithfully walked the path to Calvary to have His own flesh put to death only to rise again on the third day, He and He alone is “healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.” Jesus said very clearly in John 14:6-7, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

We are not Jesus. We are not the way. As simple and basic as this sounds, it is the part we forget and neglect the most. This is why Solomon advises us and reminds us in verse 6 of Proverbs 3, “In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” We assume we not only know the way but that we are the way. That assumption is what makes crooked our path. We see this with the disciples the moment they heard Jesus say that He is the Way. In verse 7 Philip replies and says, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” Like you and I, Philip wanted to see God according to

his own wisdom and understanding, so even though Jesus was right there in front of his eyes and in Philip’s ears, Philip’s eyes and ears went crooked.

The ways in which our Lord has blessed us and straightened our path as a church over the past year are too many to count. Not only in our personal lives but also in our life together as the church, as we look to a new year with so many possibilities on the horizon, we would do well to lay our plans and the paths we hope to pave before the Lord, surrender them, and allow Him to make them straight. How is this done? By surrendering to the Word of the Lord and not our own understanding. This means not only being in the Word of God enough to know it and be transformed by it, but yielding to His Word when it intersects with our plans, with the direction we thought we should go, and what we desire to be the way forward.

King David knew a few things about the crooked paths of lust, self-ambition, greed, and pride having to be made straight by the love, discipline, and mercy of the Lord. David cautions us in Psalm 37:4, “Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.” And He has. He has given us Himself on the cross, He has given us the empty tomb, and before ascending back to the Father our Lord Jesus promised us, “Behold, I am with you to the very end of the age.” The Way has come to us! Delight yourself in Him and in His Word for He is the destination.

JLY, Pastor Jay

ST. MARK STAFF EPIPHANY GIFT

Saints of St. Mark,

To say thank you to our hard-working St. Mark staff for their excellent service not just for the busy season of Christmas but for the entire year, the PLC and Elders would appreciate your help to provide them a monetary gift. During the Epiphany season, from January 2nd through January 16th, members of the Elders and the Parish Leadership Council (PLC) will be holding baskets in the Narthex/ Gathering Space areas after services to provide you the opportunity to donate to this gift. You may also put donations in an envelope marked “Staff Gift” which may be dropped off in the collection plate or delivered to the Church office. For those who attend or give on-line, add a note to your donation designating it as a “Staff Gift.”

Thank you in advance for your generosity.
Bruce Sharp, PLC Vice President

Mike Ringler, Head Elder



HELP US WELCOME THE STRANGER!

“You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”
Leviticus 19:34

- Become a conversation partner
- Assist with childcare
- Help refugees prepare for citizenship test

Contact Jennifer Henry - impact@stmarkomaha.org

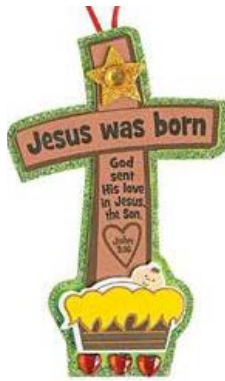


On the last Sunday before Christmas we studied the Luke 2 account of the first Christmas. It's a familiar story, but also a wonderful and amazing one to hear again as we head into the final days before our savior's birth.

The elementary aged kids had puppets. In a skit two angels are discussing God's plans to come to Earth. One angel is practicing for the Heavenly Hosts choir, but he doesn't understand why God has chosen to pay for the sins of those who disobeyed Him. The second angel helps him understand God's plan and why it is a reason to rejoice. We also did a puppet version of the Christmas carol 'Do You Hear What I Hear?' done in a synth-pop kind of style.

For the craft the kids made baby Jesus asleep in the hay in a fillable ornament ball. The back side had a star filled sky and the kids' names and the year were added.

The younger kids made a popsicle stick Jesus in the manger ornament and also an ornament from Oriental Trading that showed a cross with the manger. The kids also had a selection of activities that could be done with a child-safe manger scene, a variety of Christmas books, a music activity, and other Christmas song options to fill their morning together.



HELP PUT AWAY DECORATIONS ON SATURDAY JANUARY 8TH AT 9AM.

Contact Belva Licht (bslicht@gmail.com) or call church office.

Mother's Fellowship

**Tuesday, January 11th @ 6:30pm
in the Gathering Space.**

Contact Caitlyn Baumann
caitlyn_bleich@hotmail.com
or Kayla Lawton

jameskayla2018@gmail.com for details.

STAFF AND MINISTRY UPDATES



PRESCHOOL & CHILDCARE



Our children are happy to be back in school after having a two-week Christmas Vacation. The first week of January is always exciting as the children reconnect with their friends and teachers! Now that we are officially in winter, we will explore how animals survive the winter, the children will make snow to play in, try ice painting, and have lots of snowball fights with special

“inside” snowballs.

Each class starts the week with Chapel to introduce the weekly bible story. This month’s bible stories start with Jesus as a young boy in the temple, then move to Jesus performing several miracles by saving Jairus’ daughter, healing a blind man, and feeding 5,000 people.

Our Preschool will be closed on Monday, January 17th in observance of Martin Lutheran King, Jr. Day; however, our Childcare will be open for those families that need childcare.

As our Preschool and Childcare continues to grow, I would love to have volunteers to help with meal preparation, help with sanitizing toys, and spending time in our classrooms reading to the children.

Julie Kyriss, *Preschool & Childcare Center Director*



Lydia and Rebekah Circles will meet on **Tuesday January 25, 10:00 a.m.** in the Gathering Space.

This month: wives of King David



Mary & Martha Circle Meeting
Tuesday, February 1st at 6:30pm
in the Fellowship Hall

Please contact Nancy Holder or Jolene Scalzo for more information.



ADMINISTRATION & OPERATIONS

December was an eventful month and it was wonderful to have so many celebrations and gatherings! The Preschool held their Birthday Party for Jesus and there was a great turnout both days. Concordia Academy had their annual Christmas Concert as well as a breakfast and pajama movie theater event to finish out the first part of their school year. We were pleased to be able to host a “sold out” crowd for The Pathfinder Chorus, Nebraska’s Premier A Cappella Chorus. And our youth were once again able to hold their Cookie Walk to raise funds for the National Youth Gathering, which was a rousing success. Finally, following a month of weekly preparatory Advent Wednesday services, we culminated the season with another amazing production featuring our own praise band accompanied by a professional orchestra, including members of the Omaha Symphony, at two services on Christmas Eve.

Kelly Thompson, *Director of Administrative Operations* & Daren Clark, *Facility Technician*





CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Happy New Year!

December seemed to be a flurry of activity (thankfully not so much in the snow department). The activity culminated in the fantastic Christmas Eve/Day worship. We tried a new method of decorating for those services, which hopefully brought a new dimension to those services in the form of low-tack adhesive wall graphics. Pulled from some of the accompanying motion visuals, these presented a few challenges that I'm happy to say were overcome by the fact that the whole staff chipped in to help get them all cutout and adhered to the walls. A much needed tip from industry pros was the use of a simple preschool glue stick to ensure they stayed in place! I hope you enjoyed their use, and I know we've learned a lesson or two about how to approach this in the future with even better results.

Beginning the new year means looking at what we've done in the past and providing a "refresh" of sorts. Specifically we will be looking at the website and mobile app to see what can be improved both visually and functionally...so stay tuned for that in the upcoming months.

A significant milestone is a few short weeks away for our radio broadcast ministry, The Eternal Connection... in February, we'll be featuring our 100th episode. We are planning on how we can make this a special event...and it seems hardly possible that we've been at it this long. I am sure we'll be sharing more as we get closer.

I guess the theme of my article is "cool things are coming"..."but you'll have to wait to see" :) May the Wonders of this Season grant you the Peace of Our Savior.

God's richest blessings to you! Chip Thompson, *Director of Creative Communications*



BAND OF BROTHERS



MEN OF ST. MARK LET'S FELLOWSHIP IN THE WORD!

Join us on Saturday mornings at 9am in the Youth Room (Just off the fellowship hall) for a time of fellowship and studying God's Word together.

We are currently using St. Mark's Radio Ministry, *The Eternal Connection*, as the foundation for our Bible studies. Join us for a great time of brothers sharing with one another in the Word!

If you are not on the email list, contact Jack Swanda at jswanda@cox.net.



MEET YOUR PLC: DAN BUMAN

Introduce you and your family!

My name is Dan Buman. I have been married to my wife Melissa for 30 years this coming May. We have one son, Michael, who lives in Auburn, NE. Our daughter-in-law Rachel and granddaughter Chloe went to heaven October 2018.

I was born in Pawnee City, NE. My family moved to Lincoln where I attended Catholic schools. My Dad had an opportunity to own his own Chevrolet dealership in Madison, NE, so we moved there when I was a junior in high school. That's where I met Melissa. Our paths diverged after high school, but we met up again at our 15th high school reunion, and the rest is history.

What do I do for a living?

After high school, I worked as the service manager at Dad's dealership. When the oil embargo happened, we ended up selling the business. I started college at 28 and graduated with a degree in electrical engineering. I ended up interviewing with NPPD and have worked there ever since. My 35th work anniversary is later this year. We moved in 1995 from Columbus, NE (location of NPPD's general office) to Auburn, NE to work at Cooper Nuclear Station in Brownville, NE. I have held multiple positions there over the years and I am currently the Director of Nuclear Oversight and Strategic Asset Management. We moved to Omaha in December 2020, and I now divide my time between Brownville and Columbus. Prior to joining St. Mark we were members of Trinity Lutheran Church in Auburn, NE for 25 years.

What is something most folks do not know about me?

My hobbies are reading, studying the Bible, travel, bicycling and enjoying time spent with friends and family. We love to have company and we are big game players – cards, dominos, Farkle, Aggravation, etc. Anyone looking for a game night, just give me a call!

How long have you been member of St. Mark? /Do you have a St. Mark Story?

We have been members of St. Mark since December 2020. During the Covid shutdown prior to our joining St. Mark, we watched the streaming services while still in Auburn. We had visited St. Mark several times because the Rev. Charles Gierke was our pastor while we lived in Columbus, NE and we have maintained those ties. We visited St. Mark with our good friends, Rev. Richard and Valorie Snow during one of his district visits. We were amazed at the changes and the vibrancy of the congregation. When it came time to pick a church home in Omaha, we were excited to pick St. Mark.

What does being a member of the PLC mean to me?

I was very involved in the leadership at Trinity in Auburn. Both Melissa and I looked for opportunities to serve in our new church home, which was also a great way to meet people. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to obtain a Master's in Business Administration and have years of experience in various leadership and oversight roles. It seemed to be a natural place for me to use the talents God has provided.

What is your favorite Bible verse?

My favorite Bible verse is Ephesians 2:8-9: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." It's a great reminder that Jesus did everything for me.

Another favorite is Romans 8:34: "Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us." This was my verse picked Pastor Gierke for me when I was confirmed as an adult into the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod at Immanuel Lutheran in Columbus, NE.

HAPPY Birthday



January 1
Carol Beber

January 2
Marvin Rosenthal

January 3
Andrew Iwen
Chris Scalzo
Dillon Schlabs

January 4
Bob Sprague

January 7
Jaxon Leu
Christian Muganyizi
John Parkert

January 8
Faith Hanson

January 9
Eboni Fisher
Emily Munson
Marjorie Renner
Alex Wacker
Averie Wehner

January 10
Emersyn Colwell
William Erickson
Ciara McClusky

January 11
Holly Nickos
Chase Scharff

January 12
Christopher Beber
Sarah Boetcher
Melanie Buchele

January 14
Elizabeth Arnason

January 15
Waldine Harris

January 18
Len Adams
Mary Damon-Burke
Justin Leu
Adam Licht
Latrisha Villar

January 19
Tiffany Chapman
Danny Taylor

January 20
Katarina Matuska
Christin Senechal
Zachary Watson

January 22
Becky O'Leary

January 23
Josie Abraham
Jesse Kuhnle
Mike Ringler
Cheryl Vincent

January 24
Ashley Buckman
Marlene Gavin

January 25
Scott Buchele
Caleb Buuck

January 26
Kayla Holder
Savannah Liebsack
Melodye Olson
Shannon Schlabs
Cameron Watson

January 27
Lexi Monaco

January 28
Marvin Baumann
Julie Kyriss

January 29
Scott Holder
Kathy Johnson
Macy Smith

January 30
Jackson Corry

The Eternal Connection

St. Mark's Radio Broadcast Ministry

NEW TIME!
Every Sunday morning
at 8:00am on Boomer

Omaha: 1420 AM / 94.5 FM

Blair: 97.3 FM

Council Bluffs: 1490 AM / 106.5 FM

NEW TIME!
Every Sunday morning
at 8:00am & 10:00pm on
KCRO

Omaha: 660 AM

Lincoln: 106.7 FM

Anytime online:

EternalConnectionRadio.com

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

Health & Healing: Lori Garabrandt, Bill Rolles, Sandy Rolles, Larry Rolles, Samuel Varner, Brian Burke; Kenneth Oetter, Cheryl Bretta, Bill Howell

Military: Jordan Hammond, Meghan Murry, Andrew Toman, Zach Karels, Scott Lewis, Quenten Oldenkamp, Amber Phipps, Jarod Suhr

To request public Prayers of the Church
e-mail Kelly Thompson at
kthompson@stmarkomaha.org or call the
church and ask for Kelly.



January 2
Christian & Ashley Huesers: 6 Years

January 6
Eric & Sarah Jay: 15 Years
Roger & Kathy Johnson: 43 Years

CHURCH STAFF & LEADERSHIP

Rev. Eric Jay, Senior Pastor
Rev. Eddie Mekasha, Outreach Pastor
Julie Kyriss, Preschool & Childcare Director
Kelly Thompson, Director of Administrative Operations
Chip Thompson, Director of Creative Communications
Daren Clark, Facility Technician
Glenda Bock, Organist

Elders: Doug Doerr, Andy Groothuis, Mike Ringler, Jack Swanda, Greg Zebolsky

Parish Leadership Council: Bruce Sharp, Mike Munderloh, Jolene Scalzo, Lisa Buchele, Lisa Hayes, Chuck Kuntz, Andy Rygol, and Dan Buman



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