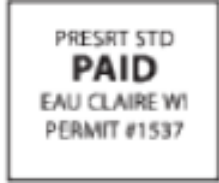




St. Mark Lutheran Church
3307 State Street
Eau Claire, WI 54701



March 2019

I was glad when they said to me:
“Let us go to the house
of the Lord.” – Ps 122:1

March worship opportunities ...

Sundays: 8:00 & 10:30 am
Mondays: 6:30 pm
Ash Wednesday: 11:00 & 6:30
March 6
Lenten Services: 11:00 & 6:30
March 13, 20 & 27

Contact Us

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This Month
**AT A
GLANCE**

- 5 – Morning Moms
Boards meet
- 6 – Ash Wednesday
Lenten Suppers
- 8 – No School
LPS Tournament
- 12 - Pastors Conf -
Hayward
- Church Council
- 13 – Lenten Services
Lenten Supper
- 19 – Morning Moms
- 20 – Lenten Services
Lenten Supper
- 21 – Religion Fair
- 27 – Lenten Services
Lenten Supper

Lenten Preparation Is a Matter of the Heart

“Even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity” (Joel 2:12-13, NIV 1984).

Are you giving up anything for Lent? For some of you this is a common question this time of year if you follow the common Christian practice. For others of you, you have never followed any such practice. Some may chalk this up (along with other traditions like the imposition of ashes) as just a Roman Catholic practice. Neither of these really is Catholic—that is, belonging to the Roman Catholic church body—so much as they are catholic—that is universal, or a historical practice of the whole Christian church. Giving up something for Lent is a form of fasting, a spiritual discipline of depriving oneself of food or other things for spiritual focus and as an act of repentance.

The spiritual discipline of fasting has precedent in the Old and New Testament church. God commanded believers in the Old Testament to hold certain fasts, for example, in preparation for the Great Day of Atonement. In the New Testament church we do not live under the same Old Testament law code. In Christian freedom we may observe certain fasts or not. The church through the ages has found certain times of fasting to be of benefit. Martin Luther writes in the Small Catechism (The Reception of the Lord’s Supper), “Fasting and other outward preparations may serve a good purpose, but he is properly prepared who believes these words: Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.” He points out that fasting may be a good preparation, however, it is not necessary for the beneficial reception of the sacrament as much as faith in the words of Jesus. Whatever outward practices we observe, it is necessary to combine them with inward faith in the heart.

The prophet Joel touched on this in his prophecy when he pointed out that people were only going through the outward actions of repentance. They would tear their garments as a show of great sorrow or outrage over sin. Others may have put on sackcloth and ashes as a show of their sorrow. But Joel points out that what the Lord was truly interested in was a tearing of the heart, so to speak. What good did the outward actions of repentance, i.e. tearing garments, do if they had no change of hearts on the inside? And if this inner attitude did not match up with outward acts, then they would not result in a true turning from sin in genuine repentance. That’s why the Lord calls them out, “Rend your hearts and not your garments.”

We also can fall into the simple act of going through outward actions. Children can simply mutter the syllables “I’m sorry” under compulsion without meaning it at all. We may say the words of confession and absolution, but is it a true confession of the lips after ... (continued on page 3)

Divine Call News

PASTORAL CALL In a February 10 call meeting between services St. Mark called Pastor Evan Chartrand to serve as associate pastor. We keep him and his wife, Joanna, in our prayers and pray for the Lord to bring us a shepherd according to his plan and purpose. Please see Pastor Chartrand's letter below.

February 11, 2019

Dear Members of Christ's Church,

God's Word tells us in 1 Corinthians 12:5-6, "There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work." Those words remind us that gospel service takes many forms in various locations. No matter the type or location of one's ministry, we all serve the one true God.

I currently have the joy of serving God's people as the recruitment director at Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, WI. On February 10, 2019, I received a divine call to serve as an associate pastor at St. Mark Lutheran Church in Eau Claire, WI. I am humbled and blessed to have received this call from God through his church.

Over the next few weeks, I will carefully and prayerfully deliberate the two calls I now hold. I humbly ask for your prayers as I consider where I may best serve God's people. I will be in contact with the leadership of both Luther Preparatory School and St. Mark as I consider these two calls. I welcome any input that will aid me during this process, and confidently trust that God will continue to bless both Luther Prep and St. Mark during this time.

Serving Christ with you,

Pastor Evan Chartrand

MEANWHILE Peter Micheel has received a divine call to serve as principal and 7-8 teacher at Christ – St. Paul Lutheran School in West Salem, WI. Please keep Peter in your prayers as he deliberates.

Upcoming Events

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, July 6th there will be a retirement celebration for Pastor and Char Prahls beginning with an Anniversary Devotion at 1:00 in the sanctuary followed by an open house in the Shaker Center. More details coming soon.

LPS BASKETBALL

TOURNAMENT St. Mark is sending two co-ed basketball teams to the Luther Preparatory School (LPS) tournament in Watertown on March 8-9.

YOUTH CONFIRMATION

Youth confirmation is the first Sunday in May. This year it falls on May 5 with examination being the previous Wednesday, May 1.

REDEEMER, RICE LAKE is celebrating its 40th anniversary with a special service. Because of the blizzard, the celebration was moved to Sunday, March 3 at 3:00 PM at Redeemer. The guest preacher is District President Mike Jensen.

St. Mark HILITES

PUBLIC USE OF THE MEANS OF GRACE:

- **Worship:** We averaged 350 per weekend in the month of January. The Lord's Supper was administered to 520.
- **Baptism:** Jonathan Crandall (b. 9/12/18) was baptized in a private ceremony on January 19; Bailey Lierman (b. 10/10/18) was baptized on February 2 also in a private ceremony.
- **Called to their eternal rest:** Roger Rast (d. 1/30/19) and Gunther Peterson (d. 1/31/19) were called home to heaven. These members were both shut-ins on our regular visitation list. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" (Rev. 14:13).
- **We welcome into membership:** Beth and Kevin Baumbach and their children Gabriel and Zander (transfer from Bethel, Arcadia-Galesville); Rachel Brantner (adult confirmation); Adam Nixdorf and children Hannah and Blake (profession of faith); and Josh Loescher (profession of faith).
- **We transfer** James Krause to Christ the Lord, Brookfield, WI.
- **We release** to her own spiritual care Caitlin Hinrichs.
- **Birth:** We rejoice with Phil and Sarah Gustafson in the birth of a healthy baby boy, Isaiah Philip Gustafson, born Thursday, February 21. The family is planning baptism on March 3.

THE LENTEN SEASON Wednesday, March 6 is Ash Wednesday and marks the beginning of the season of Lent, the somber forty-day journey of repentance and prayer. God calls sinners, "Return to the Lord!" The season of Lent culminates in the joyous celebration of Christ's resurrection on Easter. Ash Wednesday worship will be on March 6. We will have worship with Lord's Supper at 11:00 AM and 6:30 PM. The midweek Lenten series will continue the next five Wednesdays at the same time. Pastors Naumann and Pitt will preach on the theme "Three Words of Truth" throughout the midweek services. We will have Lenten suppers 5:00-6:00 in the gym on those Wednesdays.

ST. MARK NOMINATION COMMITTEE, made up of the pastors and the outgoing board members, meets in March to nominate candidates for the various board positions that serve the congregation. We are seeking individuals to serve on the board of elders (need three plus one to fill a vacancy), stewardship, education, technology (one member each), building and grounds (need two), and a congregational chairman. Men, please consider serving in one of these various positions, especially if someone from the nomination committee calls you and gives you such opportunity.

the Big Picture

... (continued from page 1) a genuine examination of the heart, or is it a mere outward going through the motions, a pretense? If you give up something for Lent, is it as a mortification of the flesh and self-denial for spiritual focus and repentance, or is it something done to look good before others or something by which we try to earn God's favor? If we never take measures to examine ourselves and focus on repentance, maybe we should ask ourselves why we don't? Can it be that we don't really see much of a need for repentance or aren't ready to see ourselves as all that bad?

God called for "fasting, weeping, and mourning" and a true rending of the heart from his people. He is the one who truly knew Israel's heart and knows our hearts. He knows them better than we do, which means that he knows that even the best of us are in constant need of repentance and sorrow over sin.

But such sorrow and mourning lead us to find a gracious God. Joel reminded his people that the Lord is "gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. He relents in sending calamity." The Lord wants truly penitent hearts because he is the gracious God who forgives sins. The Lord acted in love and patience toward us and instead brought his anger and calamity down on Jesus Christ on the cross. It is for Christ's sake that we find a gracious, forgiving Father when we return in repentance.

Whether you give up something for Lent or not, let the season be a time of true turning to the Lord in repentance, knowing that we find a gracious God who forgives all sins for Jesus' sake.