**SCHEDULES TO NOTE**

**The Lutheran Hour (Radio)**

 Sunday at 6:00 a.m. KWLM (1340 AM dial)

 7:00 a.m. KBMO (1290 AM dial)

 12:30 p.m. KMRS (1230 AM dial)

**Woman to Woman (Radio)**

 Wednesday 6:00 p.m. KDMA 1460 AM

 Thursday 10:30 a.m. KSDR 92.9 FM

 Sunday 1:00 p.m. KMSD 1510 AM

**Time of Grace Ministry**

Sunday 6:30 a.m. KMSP – Ch. 9

**Lutheran Public Radio** (24/7 Lutheran music/talk)

<http://lutheranpublicradio.org>

**LCMS MISSION STATEMENT**

In grateful response to God’s grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacraments, the mission of the LCMS is vigorously to make known the love of Christ by word and deed within our churches, communities and the world.

**MISSION STATEMENT OF THE**

**MN NORTH DISTRICT OF THE LCMS**

The mission of the Minnesota North District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod is to further the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) and to assist congregations as Great Commission churches.

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Church Telephone: 320-843-4131

Office e-mail address st.markslcms@centurylink.net

St. Mark’s Website: [www.stmarks-benson.com](http://www.stmarks-benson.com)

Pastor’s Cell Phone: 402-335-7518

Pastor’s Email address: jwolter78@hotmail.com

Sunday Worship Service: 8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.

Sunday School and Adult Bible Study: 9:15 a.m.

Communion Services: The first and second Sundays of the month.

Sunday morning worship services on KBMO Radio (1290 AM) at 9:30 a.m.

**February 2021**

**ASH WEDNESDAY & LENTEN SERVICES**

The Six Chief Parts of our Lutheran Catechism will be the emphasis for our Lenten meditations this year. Our Lenten journey will begin on Wednesday, Feb. 17th (Ash Wednesday) at 7pm.  We will be offering the Imposition of Ashes during the evening service.  But if anyone would like to receive ashes in the morning to wear throughout the day (as a silent witness to others), they may contact Pastor Wolter.  Lent will "end" on Good Friday (April 2nd).  Once again the church will be open on Saturday, April 3rd, for the Holy Easter Vigil (from 8am-8pm).  During that time, everyone is invited to come into the Lord's House of Prayer for a time of devotion, meditation and prayer. Our celebration of the resurrection will begin at 6:30 a.m. (April 4th) with a Sunrise Service. The 2nd Easter worship will begin at 9am. There will not be Bible Study or Sunday School on that day.

**EASTER LILIES**

St. Mark’s will be ordering Easter Lilies from Super Valu and the cost will be $7.00 per lily. Starting February 17th, there will be a sign-up sheet in the narthex for anyone wishing to order one in memory or honor of someone. When you sign-up please print your name and who the lily is in honor or memory of. After the second service on Easter (April 4), please feel free to take a lily from the altar home if you ordered one.

**QUILTING**

If anyone is interested in hemming quilts, please contact Jan Pagel at 320-815-8631.

**FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS**

Feb. 1: Vicky Christenson, Steve Goossen and Lillian Molden

Feb. 2: Lois Mitteness, Valerie Neuhaus and Christopher Thielke

Feb. 4: Mariah Ahrndt and Michael Thompson

Feb. 5: Michael Boraas

Feb. 6: Justin Goossen

Feb/ 7: Noah Hagen

Feb. 8: Deanna Hoffman and Emersyn Klyve

Feb. 9: Paul Ahrndt, Yvonne Rajewsky and David Vergin

Feb. 10: Karla Baumgartner

Feb. 11: Jon Amundson, Becky Halverson, Clark McDonald, Alice Rohloff and Kevin Wilts

Feb. 12: Staci Ascheman

Feb. 13: Brent Berens and Scott Schwendemann

Feb. 14: Titus Ellingson, Max McDonald and Shaleah Schmidt

Feb. 15: Herb Rajewsky

Feb. 16: Leroy Froelich

Feb. 18: Linda Muehlbauer

Feb. 21: Chuck Brandt and Josie Connelly

Feb. 22: Charlene Waslaski

Feb. 24: Maddilynn Amundson

Feb. 25: Kimberlynn Pownell and Sara Rajewsky

Feb. 26: Erica Naig

Feb. 27: Jessica Minchow and Olivia Staton

Feb. 28: Spencer Hoiland, Bill Klucas and Kason Staton

Feb. 29: Phillip McGee

**STATISTICS**

**DEATH: Harlan Paulsrud -** Born: Feb. 3, 1940

 Passed Away: Dec. 26, 2020

 Funeral Service: Jan. 5, 2021

**TRANSFERRED OUT: Matt, Jaclyn, Madelyn, Addison and Reese Van Lith** transferred to Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Milbank, SD

**NEW MAILING ADDRESS**

Starting January 1st, St. Mark’s will longer have a P.O. Box. Please use the following address:

414 15th St. N. Benson, MN 56215

**WEATHER ALERTS**

In the event that there is dangerous weather on a Sunday morning, DO NOT assume that we will still have church.  Before taking any unnecessary risks, please check the St. Mark's Facebook page... or call the church office.  Weather related announcements will be posted there.

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**St. Mark's Lutheran Church**

**Council Meeting**

**January 11, 2021**

***Present***: Kelly Demuth, Steve Kraft, Howard Mansfield, Pam Mansfield, Scott Rajewsky, Lynette Tessem, Shelly Vergin, Randy Weber, Gary Weckwerth, Kevin Wilts, Pat Winters, Pastor Wolter.

The meeting was called to order by Gary Weckwerth at 7:06 p.m. with a prayer by Pastor Wolter.

***Secretary's Report***: The minutes of the 12/13/2020 meeting were approved as printed.

***Treasurer's Report***: Treasurer’s report was approved as printed.

***Assistant Treasurer's Report***: The year end report was presented. Balances in some accounts will need to be cleared out. Lynette will work with Gary Weckwerth to ensure all accounts are paid out. There were letters for a donation to the Lutheran Island Camp (tabled until next month) and a request to adopt-a-seminary student (no action). Report was approved as printed.

***Committee Reports:***

*Elders*:

Randy Weber was elected Chairman of the Board of Elders. Howard Mansfield was selected as unofficial Vice Chair as there is no call for Vice Chair in the constitution. It was recommended to add it to the constitution when it’s reviewed.

*Trustees*:

A bid was received for the boiler pump that is out. To replace everything and replumb, it’s about $14,000. They are still looking at other options and costs.

*Evangelism*:

No Report

*Education*:

Still looking for a 3rd committee member.

*Ushers*:

It was questioned as to whether we are ready to start ushering out of service since the number of attendees is climbing back up. It was decided to continue to allow members to self-dismiss for now.

***Old Business*:**

No old business

***New Business*:**

\*An invitation was received from the insurance company for their annual meeting. Motion by Randy, second by Shelly to allow the Proxy Authorization Vote at the meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

\*The MN North District Convention is April 12-14 in Brainerd. If anyone is interested in attending as either lay delegate or alternative, contact Gary Weckwerth. If there is no interest, Gary will attend as Lay Delegate and Randy Weber will attend as Alternate.

\*There is a group of people looking at reviewing the constitution. If interested in being on the committee, contact Gary Weckwerth. The meeting will take place on Wednesday, January 20 at 6:30 p.m.

\*There is a box of shoes in the garage that need to go to Lutheran Island Camp. If anyone is going in that direction and are willing to bring them, contact the church office.

***Pastor's Report*:**

\*Concordia St. Paul is capping tuition at $6,000 for kids going into a church work careers.

\*Pastor is looking for feedback from Christmas services. Please contact him if you have any thoughts or suggestions on them.

\*The Synod puts on a Doxology program for Pastors. It is a 3-year program. Pastor is looking into this as a future endeavor and is asking the church to consider supporting it for himself or any future minister. There is also a free retreat in Wisconsin he would like at attend and is asking for gas money if he goes. Tabled until February meeting.

The meeting was closed at 8:05 with the Lord’s Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Shelly Vergin, Secretary

*The Rev’s Ramblings...*

 “I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called... with patience, bearing with one another in love,eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” *(from Eph. 4:1-3)*

As most of you know (or can guess), I do marriage counseling as part of my official duties as a Lutheran pastor. I’m not “licensed”, but I am “trained”. I’ve taken classes on counseling... and, over the years, I’ve also attended various workshops / training sessions. I try to put all of that acquired knowledge to good use when I’m working with couples that are preparing for marriage. And one of the most important bits of information that I share with them is that, when hard times come, there *are* more than just two options!

That’s important: because, in our world, people have been conditioned to believe that there are only two options to choose from when difficulties arise in a marriage. The first option is to do nothing... and remain in a miserable marriage. The other option is to end the misery... by ending the marriage. Over and over again, that’s the message that people tell one another- and themselves: that there are only two solutions. But there is a third (and better) option! And it’s not only Biblical... it’s also leads to happiness a lot more often than either of the first two choices. That third option... is reconciliation.

“*Reconciliation*” means: finding a way to bring harmony, unity and peace to divided (and/or distant) parties. When couples in conflict are willing to work towards reconciliation, the result is pretty certain: about 75% of marriages will get better after they seek help through counseling. In the case of *Christian* couples getting *Christian* counseling, that number is ***over 90%***... AND the couples say that they are happier after counseling, than they ever were before it. So... reconciliation works! It’s not only possible... it is likely (*if people are willing to seek it*). If only we could get more people to realize that there IS a third option!

While that is all very helpful for people in conflicted marriages, that’s not the purpose for this “Rambling”. This month, I want to write to you about reconciliation in our church. As much as we wish it weren’t so, our church is full of sinners (and led by a very sinful man). That’s why we go to church: to remember, receive and rejoice in the forgiveness that comes to us through faith in Christ. Through our Lord, we have been united to our Father in Heaven... and, also, united to one another: as brothers and sisters in Christ. “**He Himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down... the dividing wall of hostility**...” (*Eph. 2:14*)

Throughout the New Testament, God made it clear that He really (*really*!) wants us to be united as one family in Christ. Over and over again, the Apostles wrote to encourage believers to be united- and at peace- with one another. Well, since we’re all sinners, that’s hard to do sometimes. We have disagreements. We have different points of view. We say and do things that offend others (*sometimes by accident... and, sadly, sometimes on purpose*). We, ourselves, *(sometimes)* make it hard to dwell together in harmony and in peace. That’s why these words from Eph. 4 (cited above, on the first page) are so important for us to hear.

To maintain unity in our church family, it requires “work” on our part. It takes patience. It takes a willingness to bear with- *and forgive*- the sins of others. It takes an eager desire to strive for that peace, by actively doing the things that will lead to it: namely, confronting those who have upset us... and then forgiving them. It’s not easy. Neither is marriage counseling. But when it is faithfully pursued, reconciliation almost *always* leads to wonderful results.

When it comes to marriage, some couples are willing to put in the effort... to try to save (and improve!) their relationship and keep it intact. For the sake of the vows that they took on their wedding day (*and for the sake of their family*), they are willing to put in that effort. But when it comes to our *church* family, the temptation is to view our options as either: keeping our concerns to ourselves (*and being unhappy about things*)... or withdrawing from our church family (*either formally or informally*).

This is not unique to St. Mark’s. It happens in every church... and in every organization. The difference is, we aren’t just “a group of people”. We are a family: made such by the blood of Christ. He, Himself, *wants* us to be one... and He makes it possible: by uniting us to Himself and, therefore, to one another. He calls us to repentance... and He forgives us. He has shown us what perfect love looks like, even when He calls us to repentance. And now, after setting for us an example of that perfect love, He says to us, “***Now go and do for others as I have done for you***.”

As brothers and sisters in Christ, I know that we love each other. I pray that our love for one another will- *when necessary*- move us to work towards reconciliation with one another. And if there are dividing walls that are separating any of from one another, I pray that this season will soften our hearts and move us to seek peace with one another. We may still disagree about things... but that doesn’t have to keep us divided. Christ has made us one. May we be one: in our love for God and for one another!

**May the God of peace be with you all. Amen**. (*Rom. 15:33*)