

St Mark's LUTHERAN CHURCH VOICE

QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF REFLECTION & NEWS

Join US For
RALLY DAY
September 11, 2011

Sunday School Kickoff

All children 3 years old and older are welcome at Sunday School at 10:00 am. If you feel your child is not ready for Sunday School, come sing with us at Children's Chapel at 9:40 am. Parents and Guardians are always welcome to join us anytime. For more Sunday School information, see page 10.

Ministry Fair During Coffee Hours in Heritage Hall

Browse displays and booths to learn more about St. Mark's ministries. Various ministries leaders will share information and welcome new people to participate. Come meet St. Mark's members and visitors as you discover how to use your gifts through St. Mark's ministries. Everyone is welcome!

Garden Open House and Blessing

Come and look at the garden behind the church building on Rally Day. Gardeners from Martin Luther Tower and St. Mark's will be on-hand to talk about the progress of the garden. At 10:30 am and 12:30 pm we will have a "blessing of the garden" liturgy. Come and see – come and pray!

Reflection

by Pastor Elizabeth Ekdale

While on vacation, we worshipped at a small Episcopal congregation near Mt. Lassen. On that Sunday, the service was led entirely by lay leaders – the assigned priest was leading worship at another parish on that day. The congregation worships in a small house which had been remodeled into worship space. As we entered the front door, we stepped immediately into the

small sanctuary which seated no more than 25 people. All of a sudden, I felt a bit shy when everyone turned to look at us, but there was no turning around and leaving! Immediately, we were made to feel at home. Several people moved in order that the three of us could sit together. Once seated, someone from behind us handed me a hymnal and worship book and pointed out the correct page. I was apprehensive about how Grace, our eight year old, would do in such a small space but she settled in and enjoyed sitting snugly between Hans and myself. Though communion was not celebrated, I felt fed by the prayers, liturgy, and sermon. The singing of the hymns was done with energy and zeal.

After worship, we all walked into the kitchen where we enjoyed coffee and conversation together. The experience was very different from worship at St. Mark's, where people can come and go anonymously if they so choose. At this parish, everyone is known, welcomed, and knows everyone else's business! The topic of concern around the coffee urn was a member of the congregation who had fallen off of a ladder and had to be air-lifted to Chico for emergency surgery. The small group quickly organized themselves and made assignments regarding who would call the hospital, who would bring the meals, who would write the "get-well" card. They didn't

need a committee to organize themselves or a Pastor to make sure the care would happen – they did it themselves. Everyone pitched in and took an assignment in order to help this family in need. They were the church – a small yet vibrant congregation caring for one another and welcoming the stranger (us!) into their midst.

God wants people to be working on the things that matter most – both to them and to God.

At St. Mark's we are blessed by staff and leadership and resources. But just like that small parish in the mountains, everyone's gifts and passions are vital in order for us to be the body of Christ here at St. Mark's. I invite you to worship at St. Mark's on Rally Sunday, September 11. On this Sunday, we will have a Ministry Fair in Heritage Hall complete with booths and displays and refreshments. You can check out how you can use your gifts and talents in ministries that matter to you and to God. And if there isn't an area of ministry in which to use your gifts, let's talk about starting a new ministry! God wants people to

be working on the things that matter most – both to them and to God. No matter what size the congregation, everyone's gifts are needed – everyone's gifts are welcome.

With gratitude,
Pastor Elizabeth Ekdale

Community Meal & Worship Resumes September 14

Our Wednesday evening community dinner and worship service begins again on September 14. Come for a delicious dinner at 6:00 pm in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere in Heritage Hall. Then, be fed at a 30 minute communion service upstairs in the Sanctuary. This gathering around dinner and the altar occurs every Wednesday – come and be fed mid-week at St. Mark's! Everyone is welcome.



Pupusas for Thanksgiving

For the first time, St. Mark's is sending a delegation to visit with our sister parish, Cordero de Dios in Soyapango, El Salvador. In a spirit of giving thanks for our sister parish relationship, the trip will take place over the Thanksgiving holiday. A group of St. Mark's members - adults, children and an infant - will travel with Pastor Ekdale from San Francisco to San



Salvador, leaving November 22nd and returning November 27th. Delegates will learn about the lives and ministries of the Cordero de Dios community, so we can all learn how to better accompany each other as sister parishes. Delegates will travel, listen, meet, pray, sing, and even learn how to make pupusas (a thick corn tortilla with a filling). In English and Spanish we will share what it is like to be Lutheran in an urban setting just outside of San Salvador and in the heart of San Francisco.

Watch for ways to support the delegates representing St. Mark's. We all look forward to learning more when the group returns!



Worship Opportunities

St. Francis Day, October 1 & 2

Blessing of the Animals



St. Francis of Assisi continues to be one of the most popular of saints for all Christians. St. Francis is remembered for starting the custom of the Christmas Crèche, for ministry to the sick and marginalized, a mission to Muslims, and for his joy in God's creation.

St. Mark's will observe St. Francis Day in two ways. On Saturday morning, October 1, in the square the Blessing of the Animals will be offered as outreach to the community around St. Mark's. On Sunday morning, October 2, at the 9:00 am Eucharist, members and friends are invited to bring their pets into the Sanctuary for the Blessing of the Animals.

St. Luke's Day, October 16

Luke is called the "beloved physician" in the Scriptures, and St. Mark's is going to observe St. Luke's Day to emphasize the importance of the healing ministry of the church. There will be a special liturgy at both 9:00 and 11:00 with healing stations for individual prayers with anointing with oil, as well as a blessing for all members of St. Mark's who are in healing professions.

St. Mark's Thanksgiving Eve Service, November 23

If you stay in the Bay Area for Thanksgiving this year, please join St. Mark's for a Thanksgiving Eve Worship Service with Holy Communion. We look forward to seeing you on Wednesday, November 23 at 6:45 pm.

Reformation Sunday, October 30

by Kyle Schiefelbein

The celebration of Reformation Sunday at St. Mark's is always a special occasion, when we combine the old and the new, traditional Lutheran chorales with modern music. But why do we annually celebrate this festival, which marks the day on which Martin Luther nailed his 95 *Theses* on the church door in Wittenberg almost 500 years ago? I believe it is somewhat similar to why we annually celebrate Christmas in a mostly secular society -- it is about uniqueness. The Christian claim about the Incarnation (God becoming human in Jesus) is something unique to other religions; it was for this reason that the Apostle Paul called Christianity a "stumbling block" -- why in the world would God want to become human?

The claim of uniqueness is why we continue to celebrate Reformation Sunday. The Lutheran tradition has something unique to offer with the claim of justification by faith alone. This is especially important in today's society that is obsessed with self-help. The foundation of Lutheranism states that it is not possible to help ourselves without God's gracious and self-giving love. Nothing we do can earn God's love, but it is God who initiates the relationship. Because of this, we are called to serve our neighbor. Although some other religious traditions may make a similar claim, it is in Lutheranism that this becomes central.

For this very reason, we celebrate Reformation Sunday every year. We are called to constantly reform the church through the message of this good news.



Oktoberfest

Saturday, October 22

Good friends, good food and good times will fill Heritage Hall as St. Mark's Church Council presents the 2011 Oktoberfest on Saturday, October 22 starting at 6:00 pm. The Council will prepare traditional German food, drinks and music. You bring a dessert to share and the party will be complete. Following dinner, the Council will briefly share progress made on St. Mark's Strategic Planning Goals and gather feedback.

Last year's Oktoberfest was a great success. Come join us as we celebrate this year with fellowship, food and fun.



Annual Thanksgiving Luncheon

Sunday, November 20

Join fellow worshipers in Heritage Hall after the 11:00 am service for roast turkey and all the fixings. This is open to all—there will be a free will offering basket at the meal. Worshipers are invited to bring their pledge cards to worship in thanksgiving to God for all of God's blessings on this Sunday.



St. Mark's and the Interfaith Food Pantry

Join us in this great endeavor!

Upcoming Dates to Volunteer:

September 3 & 10
October 15 & 22
December 3 & 10

Sign up to serve in this ministry online at www.interfaithfood.org, or contact Joleen Jessen at 415.531.6322 or jessen@stmarks-sf.org.



Thrivent's Annual Free BBQ Picnic

September 18

You are invited to join us for the annual picnic sponsored by the San Francisco Thrivent Chapter Board. All Lutherans are invited to attend. We only request that you let us know you're coming so we can plan.

When: Sunday, September 18, 2011 - anytime 11:30 am-3:00 pm
Where: Speedway Meadow in Golden Gate Park (on JFK, one block west of the Crossover). Look for the big Monterey pine tree and the red & yellow Thrivent balloons!

What: A free BBQ picnic for the Lutheran community and any other friends. The day will have a WESTERN THEME, and there will be live music provided by "The Jenny Kerr Band" as well as a bouncy house and other activities.

Important note: Members of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans will cast votes for the local chapter election.

Please RSVP: Jo at 800.564.1293 or jo.zemke@thrivent.com.

Master of Theological Studies

New at PLTS this Fall

The Master of Theological Studies degree is a program offered to students desiring theological education to support a secular vocation, international students doing post-MDiv studies in one of the theological disciplines, or students preparing to do PhD or Th.D. study. The MTS provides the opportunity for two years of graduate theological study of the core of church theology—Bible, church history, ethics, and systematic theology. Classes are available evenings, weekends and online, offering the great themes of the Lutheran Christian theological tradition, and the resources of the Graduate Theological Union. For more information, all 510.559.2730 or email admissions@plts.edu.

PLTS Founders' Day

September 21, 2011

Registration is now open for the 2011 Founder's Day at the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. This year the focus will be on violence against women in Latin America and against Latinas in the United States. The ongoing feminicide in Juárez is a symptom of that violence, but the violence is not limited to the border. Undocumented migrant women in the United States are often the target of gender violence as well. How do our ideas about God and human beings change when we try to confront such violence? How might a theology informed by the experience of migrants and migration help the church respond creatively to resist violence? Such questions put theology "on edge." Featuring Dr. Nancy Elizabeth Bedford, the lecture will explore some answers from the perspective of a theology on edge which is also a theology in migration: able to take the reality of migration seriously, and also able to change and grow in the face of new realities. To register, go to www.plts.edu.

PACIFIC LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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Pet Memorial Service

October 16 at St. Aidan's Episcopal Church

Everyone is invited to an interfaith celebration of the lives of our beloved companion animals on Sunday, October 16, 2011 at 5:30 pm. The service will be led by Dr. Betty Carmack, author of "Grieving the Death of a Pet" and Lois Roach, Pet Loss Counselor with The Association for Pet Loss and Bereavement. Anyone who is grieving or has grieved the loss of a pet are especially welcome.

St. Aidan's is located at 101 Gold Mine Drive in San Francisco. For more information, call 415.285.9540.



San Francisco Interfaith Council

Interfaith Winter Shelter at St. Mark's

**** November 20-December 11, 2011 ** (earlier than usual!)**



Beginning Sunday, November 20, St Mark's will host the SF Interfaith Council Homeless Shelter for three weeks. Overnight housing, breakfasts and dinners will be provided for approximately 60 men each evening and morning in the Urban Life Center Auditorium.

Please contact John Elford at j_elford@att.net if you can help. Be a part of St. Mark's Social Ministry... we look forward to serving with you!

14th Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Prayer Breakfast

"Repairing the World: Honoring the Work of Rita Semel"

When: Tuesday, November 22, 2011, 7:00 – 9:00 AM
Where: Hotel Kabuki at 1625 Post Street, San Francisco
How: Reservations can be made online at www.sfinterfaithcouncil.org
More info: (415) 474-1321



AIDS Walk 2011 by Dana Utz

Three walkers for St. Mark's (Lyle Beckman, Lin Cerles and Dana Utz) raised \$3,900 in donations for the 2011 AIDS Walk San Francisco. On a sunny July 17 in Golden Gate Park, our team along with some 25,000 caring individuals raised over \$3,011,000 for the San Francisco AIDS Foundation and other Bay Area AIDS service organizations. Thanks to all of you who supported our team through your generous donations.

What's Happening Now in the Holy Land and Why?

by Linda Krauskopf

This autumn we at St. Mark's will set out to answer this by educating ourselves about the Holy Land: its history, current developments and the important role of Christians - including ourselves - in Palestine, birthplace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which today still figures prominently in the international news in its elusive quest for peace. Several opportunities to learn and examine our Christian heritage are scheduled and you are invited to participate in any or all of them.

Plan to attend some or all of these stimulating programs for a better understanding of the Holy Land today and the lives of our Christian brothers and sisters who courageously continue to struggle against mighty odds to sustain their families and maintain a Christian witness in the birthplace of our



Lord. This journey of study here at St. Mark's may kindle a new passion for our involvement with the Holy Land. Come – learn – discuss – share with others a virtual pilgrimage to that far away land so close to our hearts as Christians.

Are you already eager to act and influence the cause of Middle East Peace? You can get immediate updates and analyses of developments, along with recommendations for action from the website of Churches for Middle East Peace (www.CMEP.org.) The ELCA actively participates in this ecumenical advocacy group, which lobbies our

government regarding Middle East policy. CMEP's periodic online newsletters to the American public present excellent reports which enable anyone interested to follow, comprehend and join their advocacy efforts on behalf of peace, justice and human rights in the Holy Land. Learn more yourself about this responsible organization and Lutherans' participation in it. Then, a letter or phone call to your Senator, Representative or President can make a difference - right now! Check it out!



Tuesday, September 6

The new Tuesday evening women's group will feature at its first meeting a discussion of Rev. Mitri Raheb's autobiographical book *I Am a Palestinian Christian* (available at Amazon.com and highly recommended reading.)

Sunday, September 18

Rev. Mitri Raheb will be guest preacher at both the 9:00 and 11:00 services, as well as at the Adult Forum. Rev. Raheb is pastor of Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, Palestine and founder of Dar Al-Kalima College in Bethlehem.

That same afternoon, Sunday, September 18 at Grace Lutheran Church/Palo Alto, we are invited to participate in a Palestinian Festival of "Steadfast Hope": live Middle Eastern music, film, handicrafts and food, where Rev. Raheb will also speak about the current "Revolution in the Arab World: Promise or Illusion." This is a rare opportunity to hear the inside story from this activist Palestinian Christian pastor and also to learn how we could render support to the ELCA's ministries in Palestine (a hospital in Jerusalem and schools in Bethlehem and Ramallah.)

Sunday, October 23

Members of Grace Lutheran Church/Palo Alto will present a slide show and discussion of their Holy Land pilgrimage last Lenten season. This is a wonderful opportunity to see up-to-date photos and hear a first-hand report from fellow Bay Area Lutherans who have so recently traveled there. This program will be presented twice: during Adult Forum at 10:00 and again following the 11:00 service.

Sundays in November

Adult Forum will feature the DVD study series "Steadfast Hope" (named for the courageous stance of Christians striving to maintain a Christian presence in the Holy Land in the face of unresolved political issues). This series on four Sundays will examine the Holy Land's history; the complexities of the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict and hopes for peace; and what Christians can do to help and also influence the quest for peace, justice and human rights in Palestine and Israel.

Sunday, December 11

A film about contemporary "Little Town of Bethlehem" will be shown and discussed, featuring experiences and viewpoints of a Christian, an Israeli soldier and a Moslem who find common purpose and resolve in their non-violent efforts for peace in that troubled city. This will challenge and update our vision of the town that gave birth to Jesus Christ.

A Reflection on Recent Events in Norway

by Rev. Dr. William H. Ruth

Coordinating Committee, Racial/Ethnic Ministries Working Group of the Sierra Pacific Synod

Along with everyone else in the Synod, the coordinating committee of the Synod's Racial/Ethnic Ministries Working Group reflected this week on our shock and dismay at the violence that occurred in Oslo, Norway. Our prayers are with the people of Norway as they face this terrible tragedy.

In our discussion of this event, we were aware of the reports that the perpetrator of this violence in Norway was influenced by similar expressions of racial polarization and violence in the United States. The tragic reality is that "copycats" of hate wreak havoc and destruction in our local communities and throughout the world. We can see in this event a demonstration of how much the sin of racism is infecting the whole world.

The three teams of our racial ethnic working group (Anti-Racism Team, Mission Strategy Team, and Cultural Competence/ Multicultural Diversity Team) are committed to the task of overcoming racial divisions. Together we are working to change the atmosphere of our own church and our own communities so that instead of "copycats" of racial violence, we will be promoting "copycats" of mutual respect, mutual dialogue, and mutual understanding. We are hoping that our work in the Synod will carry over into our communities and into the nation to help us to react to people who are different from us with God's love and justice, and to "to sow seeds of freedom from the ashes of the hate."

This was published in the Sierra Pacific Synod's e newsletter on July 28. If anyone is interested in learning about how we can pursue overcoming racial division, you might want to attend one of the following workshops sponsored by the Synod.

November 12 - Cultural Competence: the Foundation for the Re-Emerging Multicultural Church

St. Matthew in Walnut Creek - A workshop for teaching and equipping members and leaders of congregations to become more culturally competent to enhance and strengthen the work of multicultural ministries in our churches and communities. For more information see www.saintmatthew.org/conference.

November 17-19 - Anti-Racism Workshop

San Damiano Retreat Center - A dynamic two and a half day anti-racism workshop and retreat. For more information contact the Sierra Pacific Synod.

If you are interested in working on this issue at St. Mark's or want more information, please contact Mary Ritter (mirpeds@aol.com) or Suzanne Smith at 415.285.7438 or (suzathome@astound.net).

The Gay Gospels

Who: Keith Sharpe, Author and LGBT Activist

What: Lecture and book signing

When: October 6th, 7 pm

Where: **St. Mark's Lutheran Church Sanctuary**

The four gospels of the Bible's New Testament bring the Good News of Christ's salvation to 'all mankind'. For many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) people, however, the good news has had a hard job getting through, says author gay activist Keith Sharpe. As a response, he brings us *The Gay Gospels* an illuminating and captivating read. Please join us as we spend an evening with Keith Sharpe and immerse ourselves in some truly good news.

The Gay Gospels stand against the 'lobber texts' which condemn gay people, and powerfully affirm that gay lives are validated in the Bible. The place of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people in the Christian churches is a highly controversial and debatable issue now. The stance of many churches is that homosexuality is sinful and incompatible with Christianity. In seeking to respond to attacks on their lives, identities and relationships, LGBT Christians have moved over recent decades from a defensive position to a more affirmative position which asserts that there is evidence in the Bible and the Jesus tradition of validated homoerotic experience.

This compelling and encouraging read touches on unique themes including:

- A strong defense against the handful of biblical texts usually cited to attack gay people and their relationships
- A powerful affirmation that gay lives and relationships are validated in both the Old and New Testaments
- Research grounded in respected academic and biblical scholarship
- A gay perspective in everyday accessible language
- A clear two testament structure comprising short readable chapters

About the author:

Keith Sharpe is an early retired professor of education. He has been published widely in books and academic journals in the fields of sociology of education, comparative education, teaching methodology and pedagogy. His book on the teaching of modern foreign languages was a market leader for almost a decade.

Since his retirement he has studied theology and become active in the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement and the international campaigning organization, Changing Attitude, of which he is a member of the national Board of Trustees. He founded and chairs the Sussex branch of this organization.

He writes a regular column in *Gscene*, a gay magazine, in which he tries to persuade LGBT readers that while the Church may appear to be an enemy it nevertheless is the bearer of the good news brought by the Jesus Tradition. Past editions can be read at www.gscene.com. It is the success of these articles which provided the impetus for the '*The Gay Gospels*'. Now a gay Christian writer and activist, Keith Sharpe lives in London with his long term partner.

New St. Mark's Member Shares Her Story

by Kellie Seringer



I adopted a 9 year old little girl out of foster care in the summer of 2010. A description of her life to that point would bring you to tears; it's hard to imagine how a child internalizes all that pain. When Amari came to San Francisco, she was a little ball of nerves, acting out, eating with her hands and she had had virtually no experiences. Needless to say, we had a difficult time during our first six months together. The fact that I am a single, first time mother did not help. It was during this tumultuous period when I remember Amari asked to be baptized. I was shocked, but in hindsight maybe I shouldn't have been so surprised. She asked around Christmas and Amari had never celebrated Christmas before. She said she wanted to know Jesus.

"Oh no," I thought, "I need to find a church." I had been brought up Catholic and even as a young child, I had many disagreements with the way the church was structured. My total experience with religion had been a "going through the motions" routine. When I went to college I stopped going to church completely. Amari's request forced me to look at this from a different perspective. I spoke to my father at length and he said, "it isn't about you anymore, sweetie, if Amari wants religion, you need to find a church." I found a few churches in San Francisco that we attended, but what I found with St. Mark's was a community. Amari loves all her friends at church, her face glows when someone reaches out to her and says hello during the service. She is very engaged with Sunday school, the knitting group, and the sharing of food. I really value the music!

Pr. Christian was also very welcoming to us and was a stable directional lead during Amari's baptism and my affirmation of baptism. He was so diligent in remembering everyone's name with a personal address during communion. We do miss him greatly. St. Mark's has provided us with another layer of structure that is so important for Amari's development and nice for me too. We pray together now and are grateful for this love in our lives.

Sacred Acts at St. Mark's

Join us in commemorating the recent sacred events in our parish:

Baptisms

Jadeyn Siena Dober on June 12

Sofia Bouzidi on August 11

Please contact one of the pastors to schedule a baptism for one of your children or yourself.

Confirmations

Young people confirmed on June 12:

Coco Ocker

Erika Taylor

Astra Varian

David Wiese

Weddings

Marisa Louie and Gilbert Lee on July 23

Pentecost Sunday, June 12, 2011

Clockwise: baptism of Jadeyn Dober; festive Pentecost banner; David Wiese, Coco Ocker, Pastor Elizabeth, Erika Taylor, Astra Varian





St. Mark's Choir

If you have ever considered joining the St. Mark's Choir, now is a great time! The choir sings every week at the 11 am service, as well as some festivals and special liturgies. Some musical background is needed, but don't let that stop you from contacting our Director of Music, Timothy Zerlang (zerlang@stmarks-sf.org). Let him help you decide if this valuable and enjoyable ministry is right for you. Our first rehearsal this Fall will be Wednesday, September 7, at 7:30 pm, but you can join us anytime.



All Bach for Beasts

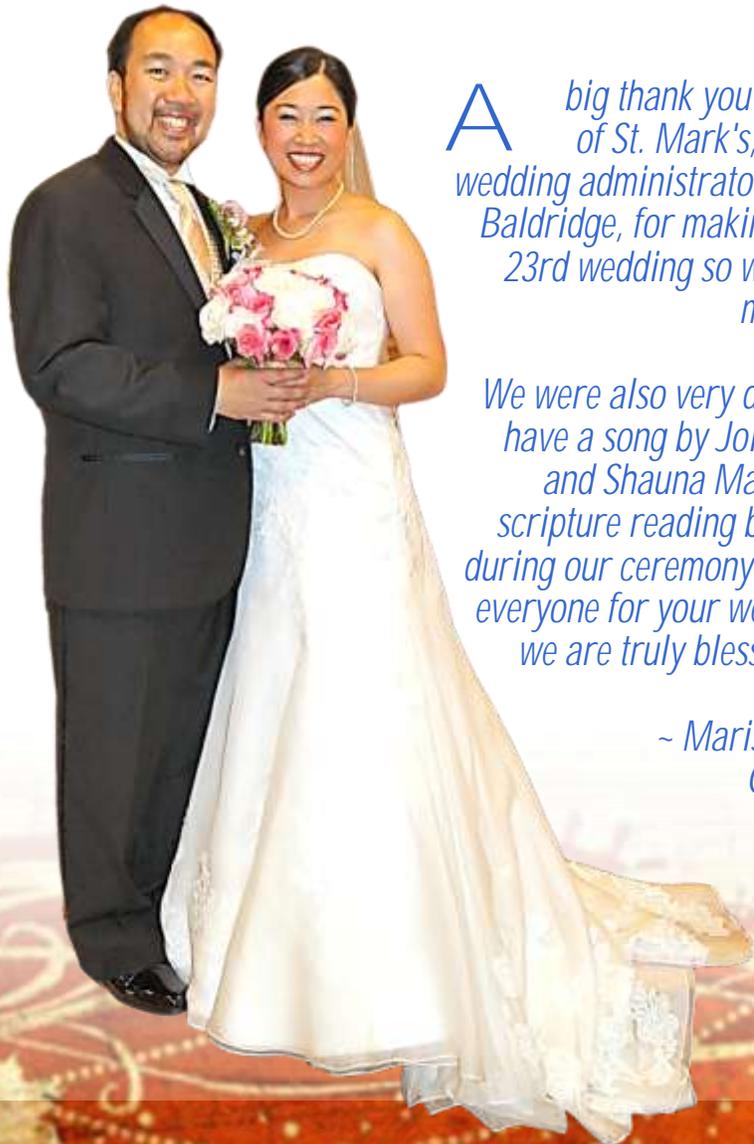
On Sunday, October 2 at 2:00 pm, St. Mark's will host an all Bach concert for the benefit of animals. The concert will be given by Karen McKinney, a retired, MM and DMA former Lecturer in Organ for California State University, now living in Leipzig and doing research on Bach's own art of organ-playing. There is no charge for this event, but there will be a free will offering; proceeds of the concert will be given to the San Francisco SPCA. Mark your calendars for this special music event!



Organ Concert by Timothy Zerlang

2:00 PM, Sunday
January 15, 2012

Save the Date!



A big thank you to the staff of St. Mark's, especially wedding administrator Elizabeth Baldrige, for making our July 23rd wedding so wonderfully memorable.

We were also very delighted to have a song by Joleen Jessen and Shauna Malone and a scripture reading by Liv Beck during our ceremony. Thanks to everyone for your well wishes - we are truly blessed by you!

~ Marisa Louie & Gilbert Lee

MEMBER WEDDING

Left to right: Andreas Kemp and Shauna Malone and their daughters, Mara and Carly; the happy couple, Gilbert and Marisa; Liv Beck and Aaron Grieg, and their son Ryan



Sunday School News

by Jenny Hart

September 11th is Rally Day when we kick off a new year of Sunday School. We will also have the Ministry Fair after both services, which will showcase all the ministries at St. Mark's. Please explore the many opportunities to participate at St. Mark's.

As you all know, Lisa Gray "retired" from the Sunday School staff last May, after 5 years of teaching. Charlene Loen has stepped forward to join our team as the new Preschool teacher. Charlene and her husband, Ralph, volunteered last year as well. Charlene helped Lisa in Preschool and Ralph played the ukulele during Children's Chapel. They both bring a loving spirit and many talents to the program. Please welcome their return warmly; we are so happy to have them.

All children 3 years old and older are welcome at Sunday School. If you feel your child is not ready for Sunday School, come to Children's Chapel and sing with us. Parents and Guardians are always welcome to join us anytime.

This year we are rearranging the 9:00 am service a bit to accommodate families and children taking communion. This will have an effect on when Children's Chapel starts. We plan on heading over to the Urban Life Center for Children's Chapel immediately after communion. We will be in the back of the church and wait until all have finished communion before we head over.

Here is the regular Sunday School schedule:

- 9:40 am (approx.): Communion finishes. Sunday School staff exits Sanctuary with children and will enter the Urban Life Center via the Starr King entrance. Staff member waits at the Starr King entrance until 9:50 am for latecomers.
- 9:40-10:00 am: Children's Chapel with Susan and Jeff Sall and Ralph Loen – Joyful children's songs with instrumental accompaniment.
- 10:00-10:45 am: Sunday School instruction by age group.
- 10:45 am: Sunday School pick-up using Church office door-downstairs from Plaza. Ring doorbell to be let in. Wait in lobby if your children's class has not been dismissed.



Please consider attending Sunday School on a regular basis. Those students who attend regularly form bonds with other children and their church. We have a wonderful Sunday School community at St. Mark's...take advantage of it on a regular basis.

If you are interested in participating or have any questions please contact Jenny Hart: hartx4@hotmail.com.

Adult Forum | Sundays at 10:10 am | Fireside Room

September 18	Rev. Mitri Raheb from Palestine (see Holy Land article on page 6)
September 25, October 2, 9 & 16	"Modern Maladies of the Soul" - A four week series led by the Rev. Dr. Herbert Anderson, currently Research Professor of Practical Theology at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. Each Forum will address a different malady (cynicism, loneliness, despair, and anxiety) confronting our lives and culture in the modern world. Dr. Anderson is also the husband of the Rev. Dr. Phyllis Anderson, president of PLTS.
October 23	Film on Holy Land Pilgrimage (see Holy Land article on page 6)
October 30	To be announced
November 6, 13, 20 & 27	"Steadfast Hope—The Quest for Just Peace" led by Linda Krauskopf (see Holy Land article on page 6)

Women's Monthly Study Gatherings

In the spirit of today the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America have chosen new language to describe their monthly magazine. It will be known as "gather" and St. Mark's is continuing the theme by calling our study groups - Gatherings. All women are welcome to the Gatherings this autumn.



There are two different groups meeting at different dates, times and using different study materials.

First Tuesdays from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm Fireside Room

We will be looking at Biblical women's stories, current compelling stories and sharing our own stories on the first Tuesday's of the month from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm in the Fireside Room. All women are invited to come for dessert and fellowship for the first half hour and then discussion until 8:30.

The books for the autumn are:

September 6

I Am A Palestinian Christian by Mitri Raheb and chapter 1 of the Book of Ruth. Mitri Raheb will be visiting St. Mark's later in September and this book will not only give us some of his personal history but also ask us to think about questions of interpreting the Bible in an Israeli-Palestinian context.

October 4, November 1, December 6

Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide by Nicholas D. Kirstof and Sheryl WuDunn along with a chapter each time in the Book of Ruth.

Second Tuesdays from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm Fireside Room

All women are invited to come for study at 11:00 and lunch at noon. Bring a sandwich or salad and share fellowship. Drinks and dessert will be provided. This year we will be studying the Book of Mark using the Women of the ELCA's guide developed by Patricia Lull, sister-in-law to our own Mary Carlton Lull.

Our sessions will include:

September 13

The Gospel of Mark, chapter 1, "Jesus of Nazareth"

October 11

The Gospel of Mark, chapters 2 & 3, "Mother and Brothers"

November 8

The Gospel of Mark, chapters 4:1 – 6:29, "Power and Authority"

If you have any questions, please contact Suzanne Smith at 415.285.7438 or suzathome@astound.net.

WELCA Eighth Triennial Gathering in Spokane, July 14-17, 2011

by Nadine Robinson & Marlo Tellschow

Over 2,000 Lutheran women-and a few good men-converged in Spokane, Washington for the Eighth Triennial Gathering of the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The theme of the conference "Renew, Respond, Rejoice", was based on Philippians 4:4-9. Four women from St. Mark's attended the Gathering: Joleen Jessen, Mary Carlton Lull, Nadine Robinson and Marlo Tellschow.

Nora Gallagher, currently preacher-in-residence at Trinity Episcopal Church in Santa Barbara, shared her story of spiritual renewal after nearly losing her sight. She learned to focus on What is Real Now, and how to "see" in a new way. Leymah Gbowee gave a powerful presentation on Reclaiming Our Space, as she recounted her experience in organizing thousands of Liberian women to take a stand for peace. Using silent protest and prayer, she helped coerce Liberian dictator Charles Taylor to negotiate for peace, after 14 years of civil war.

In addition to the keynote speakers there were a number of useful workshops. Of special note was a workshop by Rev. Patricia Lull, sister-in-law of Mary Carlton Lull, on "To Follow and to Serve: The Gospel of Mark." This will be the basis of the coming year's Bible Study for Women of the ELCA. There were other St. Mark's connections on the program-most notably, Rev. Mary Louise Frenchman. Mary Louise interned at St. Paulus, with Pastor Elizabeth as her supervisor, while she completed the Alternate Route to Ordination at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley. Mary Louise was the celebrant at the closing worship service in Spokane.

A new feature at this Triennial Gathering was the showing of two films. The first was "Pray the Devil Back to Hell," which chronicles the work of Leymah Gbowee in leading the delegation of Liberian women to Ghana to continue to apply pressure during the Liberian peace negotiations. The second film was the 2009 Emmy

-winning documentary "A Walk to Beautiful," which tells the story of 5 Ethiopian women suffering from Fistula. This medical condition is the result of inadequate obstetrical care for women in developing countries. The demand for both films was so great that they had to schedule additional showings.

There were also opportunities for fellowship. Lutherans Concerned and other groups hosted hospitality suites with refreshments, enabling participants to share and network.

Each year women of the ELCA take up offerings for special projects and ministries. On the final day of the conference, the Women of the ELCA presented Spokane-area organizations with hundreds of "in-kind" gifts to support women and children living with homelessness, in transition, or who have been victims of violence. The work of the Evangelical Lutheran Coalition for Mission in Appalachia will also benefit from the 2011 Triennial conference offering. This donation will

help support its work in environmental stewardship, water distribution, and mountaintop removal mining. The Rev. Mark S. Hanson, ELCA presiding bishop, addressed the conference and thanked the women for their generosity and encouraged them "to keep raising up women for leadership in the church and in civil society."

The next Women of the ELCA Triennial Convention and Gathering will be held in July 2014 in Charlotte, North Carolina.





SMOP at St. Mark's

by Tom Benson

Our St. Mark's hiking and environmental service group SMOP ("St. Marks Our Planet") has hosted a series of beautiful hikes and meaningful service projects for members and friends during the past year. The photo shows our SMOP group at Schollenberger Park in Petaluma last December, where we planted a vast quantity of native grasses, bushes and trees. The White Alder tree shown in the picture is a great nitrogen-fixer that will help restore a vibrant plant community.



Interim Ministry

The Sierra Pacific Synod is implementing Interim Ministry as a specialized form of ministry to assist congregations in various kinds of transitions and changes. Specialized training is required in order to develop these skills and be certified for this ministry. Pr. Paul Brenner is serving as our Interim Associate to assist in assessing staffing needs and opportunities within the long term goals of St. Mark's, along with providing the usual range of pastoral care services.



Senior Center Trips

Senior Trips depart from the Brockie Lounge at MLT. The trips generally take place on a Friday, and the usual departure time is 10 am unless indicated otherwise. Cost: \$3 (transportation fee.) To RSVP please call the MLT office at 415.885.1084.

September 23: John Muir Mansion, Alhambra Valley (Martinez)



We will visit the Muir home in Martinez, California, where John Muir and his family lived and worked for the last 24 years of his life. Muir is most known for his love and respect of nature, and Yosemite, Sequoia,

Grand Canyon and Mt. Rainier National Parks are part of his legacy. Adjacent is 325 acres of oak woodland and wildflowers for nature walks.

- October 28: TBD
- November 18: TBD
- December 6: International Crèche Exhibit, Palo Alto... **Save the date!**

Watch the weekly announcements for information on trips in October and November.

Senior Center Luncheons

Senior Center Luncheons take place in Heritage Hall every third Thursday of the month from 12 noon to approximately 1:00 pm. Cost: \$4. To RSVP for lunches please call the MLT Office at 415.885.1084.

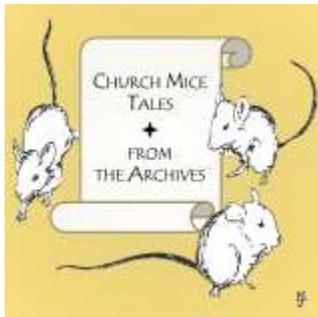
Lunch dates for the next 3 months are:

September 15

October 20

November: No luncheon. All MLT residents are **invited to join St. Mark's for their annual Thanksgiving Luncheon** following the 11 am service on Sunday, November 20th.





Fifth Anniversary of St. Mark's Renovation

Can it be 5 years already? Can you believe the stunning outcome that resulted from all the construction mess? Does this photo spark memories?

On December 10th we'll celebrate the 5th anniversary of the "Fling Wide the Doors" reopening following an \$11 million seismic strengthening and restoration. The church was closed from June 2005 to December 2006 for this major project to meet the city's safety requirements for masonry buildings. The 15 year saga endured by many was marked by dreams, starts and stops, disappointments, firmness of purpose, and finally the gratifying accomplishment we now enjoy.



Renovation of St. Mark's sanctuary in 2005-2006

From the very beginning there were voices of doubt: "It can't be done." "Where would we get the money." "Let's tear down this old church and build a modern one." "Let's just give up and move out of San Francisco." But doubts were pushed aside and replaced by faith, determination, and hope, beginning with our first major fund raiser in 1995—a rousing benefit performance by a visitor from Lake Wobegon, Garrison Keillor.

Gratefully, those voices of doubt can now be silent, thanks to the determination and generosity of so many. Hallelujah.

✂

This is the 13th in a series of tales from St. Mark's Archives, by Marge Jencks

Council HIGHLIGHTS

May 19, 2011 Council Meeting

- Dates for Homeless Shelter are November 20-December 11
- Discussed need for fulfillment of pledges to current Forward in Faith capital campaign
- Announced purchase of Sauter piano, and that additional gifts are needed. Concert by Dr. Zerlang planned for July 3rd
- Reported formation of new Finance Committee to help oversee finances, budget planning, and investments
- Announced special volunteer needs for Interfaith Food Pantry, pre-school teacher for Sunday School & Property Committee projects
- Announced new MLT website, and need to consider capital improvements at MLT
- Discussed progress of Strategic Goals, mentioning especially the interest shown in Stephen Ministry, a planned Engagement Table, and the selection of marketing strategy leader
- Discussed selection process for Interim Associate Pastor
- Discussed potential impact on St. Mark's from development plans of California Pacific Medical Center (CPMC) on site of Cathedral Hill Hotel
- Announced visit to El Salvador by a St. Mark's group during Thanksgiving holidays

June 16, 2011 Council Meeting

- Selected Rev. Paul Brenner to be Interim Associate Pastor, and discussed his role in guiding the discernment process regarding future staffing
- Discussed meeting with CPMC representatives who presented plans and answered questions regarding proposed development nearby
- Reported potential plan to pay remaining balance of Thrivent loan to save interest owed

St. Mark's Living Heritage and the St. Mark's Endowment

by Debra Varian

During the annual meeting last January, the Congregation approved the establishment of the St. Mark's Endowment Fund at the Lutheran Community Foundation (the LCF). Initial gifts of \$25,000 to the Endowment Fund have been transferred to the LCF and the Endowment Fund account has been opened.

The Endowment Committee includes 9 members, as follows: 3-year terms for Brad Hubert, Greg Jahnke, and Debra Varian; 2-year terms for Stacy Cullison, Aaron Greig, and Margaret McLean; 1-year terms for Marge Jencks, Roger Ostrem and Shelly Taylor. The Committee elected Debra as Chairperson, Stacy as Secretary, and Brad as Advisor to LCF.

According to the by-laws governing the St. Mark's Endowment Fund, gifts to the Fund shall accumulate for three years, or until the value of the Fund reaches \$100,000, whichever comes first. At that time, distributions from the Fund will begin.

In the meantime, the Committee is focusing its current efforts on planning educational opportunities and events that will help congregants learn more about the options available to them when they do their personal estate planning. Options include charitable remainder trusts and gift annuities that may provide tax deductions during your lifetime and reduce estate and inheritance taxes after your death, leaving more assets available for distribution to your loved ones as well as non-profit charitable organizations like St. Mark's. As we go forward with education about estate planning (aka planned giving), we will use the hallmark St. Mark's Living Heritage.

Individuals who wish to inquire for more information about estate and other gifts to the Endowment Fund may contact any member of the Endowment Committee, or if anonymity is desired, individuals may contact the LCF directly by phoning 800-365-4172. A variety of information is also available on the LCF website at www.thelcf.org.

The Endowment Committee will also have materials and be available for questions during the Ministry Team Fair to be held in Heritage Hall on September 11, 2011.



**Plant Seeds of Joy
Grow Gifts of Faith
To Benefit the Future of St. Mark's**

Your Gifts at Work

Annual Giving 2011

Forward in Faith

Three year pledge (2009-2011)	
No. of pledges	108 out of 211 possible
Pledged	\$547,554
Received thru 08/31/11	\$398,241

General Fund

One year pledge (2011)	
No. of pledges	128 out of 211 possible
Pledged	\$365,739
Received thru 08/31/11	\$216,087

Income versus Expenses

Jan-Aug '11	Actual	Budget
Income	\$361,056	\$336,428
Expense	\$336,399	\$339,800
NET	\$24,657	(\$3,372)



Almost There!

by the Stewardship Committee

Nearly six years ago, St. Mark's members and friends pledged to support a major renovation of our church. Construction work began in June 2005 and was finished in December 2006. Now, as we approach the five year anniversary of the completion of the renovation, we also approach completion of the second capital campaign.

How are we doing? The good news: we're almost there! If everyone who pledged to the capital campaign pays in full, we will and pay off our entire debt by the end of this year. This is remarkable, but it depends entirely on folks fulfilling their pledges.

You are invited to fulfill your pledge in the manner you originally intended....a pledge of love and support for St. Mark's and its mission and ministries. If possible, consider fulfilling your pledge at your earliest opportunity— sooner than later helps avoid further interest costs.

Help us finish strong. Fulfill your pledge as soon as possible and help put debt behind us. Thank you for your loving support of St. Mark's!

Staff

The Rev. Elizabeth E. Ekdale

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The Rev. Paul Brenner

Interim Associate Pastor
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Dr. Timothy Zerlang

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The Rev. Chuck Lewis

Visitation Pastor

Duc Huynh

Buildings & Grounds Supervisor

Carl Storey

Security

Elvira Markov & Johanna Najera

Nursery Attendants

Jenny Hart

Sunday School Coordinator

Jan Charter

Church Council President

St Mark's
LUTHERAN CHURCH
1111 O'FARRELL STREET, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94109
(415) 928-7770 PHONE | (415) 928-8534 FAX
www.stmarks-sf.org

St. Mark's Worship Schedule

Sundays

9:00 am	HOLY COMMUNION w/Children's Time
10:00 am	Sunday School
10:00 am	Adult Forum
11:00 am	CHORAL EUCHARIST
12:15 pm	Coffee and Fellowship Hour

Wednesdays

6:00 pm	Midweek Supper
6:45 pm	MIDWEEK HOLY COMMUNION
7:30 pm	Adult Choir Rehearsal

Church Office Hours



On Tuesday, September 6, the church office will resume regular hours:

Monday through Friday
9:00 am to 5:00 pm

Office Closures

Monday, September 5 (Labor Day)
Thursday and Friday, November 24 & 25 (Thanksgiving)

St. Mark's is a "Reconciling in Christ" Congregation. St. Mark's is one of over 315 congregations, 22 synods and 12 organizations across the ELCA and the ELIC (Canada) which have declared that lesbian and gay people are equally welcome to join fully in the worship and life of this Christ-centered community. For more information, please contact Steve Krefting at krefting@stmarks-sf.org or 415.826.3124 or speak to one of the pastors.

St. Mark's is a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



The Rev. Mark S. Hanson, Presiding Bishop
The Rev. Mark W. Holmerud, Bishop, Sierra Pacific Synod
The Rev. Susan Strouse, Dean, San Francisco Conference
Sister Parish: Cordero de Dios Lutheran Church in Soyapango, El Salvador