

The Evangel

In the heart of the city for ministry to the world

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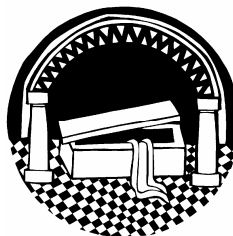
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LENT AND EASTER AT ST. MARK'S



★ **LENTEN MIDWEEK WORSHIP**

Wednesday, March 5 and 12.

12:00 pm Worship followed by 12:30 pm Lunch
6:00 pm Soup Supper followed by 6:45 pm Taize Evening Prayer
7:30 pm Journeys in Faith Gathering in the Fireside Room

★ **SUNDAY OF THE PASSION - PALM SUNDAY, MARCH 16**

9:00 & 11:00 am Procession with Palms & Holy Eucharist

★ **MAUNDY THURSDAY, MARCH 20**

7:30 pm Foot Washing, Choral Eucharist, and Stripping of the Altar

★ **GOOD FRIDAY, MARCH 21**

12:00 pm Stations of the Cross
7:30 pm Liturgy of Good Friday "Passion According to St. John"
St. Mark's Choir

★ **EASTER VIGIL, SATURDAY, MARCH 22**

7:30 pm Service of Light, Service of Readings, Holy Baptism & Renewal of Baptismal Vows, First Eucharist of Easter, Festive Reception to follow in Heritage Hall
(Please note that incense will be used at this service)

★ **EASTER DAY, SUNDAY, MARCH 23**

8:00 to 10:30 am Pancake Breakfast in Heritage Hall
9:00 am Festive Communion Service
10:15 am Easter Egg Hunt on St. Mark's Square
11:00 am Festival Choral Eucharist
12:15 pm Coffee and Fellowship Hour

Reflection from Pastor Ekdale

Isaiah 43:19

I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

Familiar routines are comforting and safe. We know what to do and what to expect. In Easter, we celebrate a change of routine. God is doing a new thing - bringing forth new life in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The routine and predictability of death has been broken. We live as a changed people - a resurrection people. Never again do we resign ourselves to face life in the same way or be forced into repeating the same routines. Yes, change brings anxiety and grief. But it also can bring growth and newness. Look around with Easter vision - there is new life to be experienced - new life to be celebrated - do you not perceive it in our very midst?



Children at St. Mark's Sunday School make stockings for the homeless shelter.

Children of God

Bishop David G. Mullen

on Luke 2:22-40

Sermon given at St. Mark's Candlemas service on February 2, 2008



The Presentation of our Lord is about more than remembrance of an historical moment. According to Luke, even at the time, there was more going on. The mystery of God's Spirit was present, confirming a deeper reality of the child. In other words, this was more than routine ceremony. This child was the anointed of God, the long-awaited one.

When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple to do what the Law of Moses says should be done for a new baby, the Spirit told Simeon to go into the temple. Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms and praised God,

"Lord, I am your servant, and now I can die in peace, because you have kept your promise to me..."

To be able to die in peace because one has seen this child is indeed the fruition of hope, and becomes for Simeon a deep resting in the promises of God.

Transcending the historical moment the story is present for us with this truth: we also can die in peace, as it were, because this child, this anointed is for us, is present to us, and is the fulfilling of all the prophetic yearnings of our souls. To see this in Christ is to find hope and the courage to carry on.

For the blessing of God in this Jesus the child and in Jesus the crucified is the archetype of the most primal understanding in Christianity: in our baptisms, there was, or is, more going on than mere ceremony. No matter at what age we were baptized—infant, child, or adult—inherent in the sacrament is the proclamation that every baptized one is a child of God. Baptism is about the archetype of the beloved child, the indelible reality, the delight of God never to be taken away. In our baptism we too hear the wonderful voice from the heaven, "This is my beloved child, with whom I am well pleased."

God is well-pleased, but as we know only too well, often people are not. There are abusive parents, there are cruel classmates in school, there are bullies on the job, and perhaps most cruelly in the church, there are those who make gender orientation the

litmus test for affirmation, as though the long exclusion and closeting justified by scriptural text-proofing and the misunderstood apostolic tradition, trumps what God in the sacrament declares.

The failure of truly apostolic understanding at this point distorts lives, breaks hearts, torments parents, and indeed has caused Lutherans, at least, to get stuck in Vision and Expectations, constitutional maneuvering, and twenty plus years of argument and discussion, when, one would think the meaning of the Child ought to be apparent. And even though perhaps in some ways the conversation has become more civil, and some progress perhaps has been made, good intentions need to come to the point of living the truth: all the baptized are children of God, completely and fully, and should be afforded the privilege of serving the church and the



St. Mark's altar is made ready for the February 2 Candlemas Service

world in accordance with the truth in Christ the archetype of the beloved child.

And so, it is more likely that many live in the archetype of the Christ the crucified one, the one hanging on the cross. This is the promise of God in the Child refracted through human history, confronting bias, traditions, prejudice, and unexamined assumptions about other human beings. It is as Simeon said to mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too." Thus the cause of Jesus the Christ advances with blood, sweat, and tears. But oh what gifts and talents have been trampled or lost, and how constricted the gospel about Jesus has often, if not always, been. And yet at the same time, the persecuted and the rejected--still compelled by the delight of God, still seeing the promise of God in the Child--share in Christ's passion for the sake of the marginalized.

Not that we want this to be so, but living with the experience of being marginalized, suppressed, oppressed, or broken, there is a sense of comprehending the needful power of welcome, as we find it in Christ; and how blest are those who visit congregations whose members have seen in clear ways that all God's children are to be invited and embraced, no matter what the rough edges or the predicaments they may present. The welcome, the delight in others, as children of God: this is the beginning of joy in the church. It

begins there, with the welcome and the joy--the primal experience of God--and then journeys along the road with Christ, learning the ways of God in human community. This is to be like Anna, the prophetess, seeing and speaking about the child Jesus to everyone who hoped for Jerusalem to be set free.

Jerusalem set free! And the years of bondage and exclusion grind on and on but still hope persists. Over the past year or so, I became a grandpa. You know how you can set up your screen saver to cycle through your picture files? Well, of course, I have my grandchildren, little Audrey and Phoenix, showing up regularly on my screen savers. I find that the cycling of those images has become for me a mode of prayer. I cannot know, now, of course, whether they will be straight or gay. And does it really matter? Well, yes and no. Yes, it matters a lot if the churches and culture cannot celebrate every child of God. But no, it won't matter at all, if at long last the church has seen and can say with full heart, to my grandchildren and to all children of God "You are beloved, and with you we are well-pleased".

When we get to that, seeing Christ the child in all the children, then, like Simeon, you and I can sing, *Lord, I am your servant, and now I can die in peace.* Amen.

Midweek Lenten Eucharist Service

March 26 through May 7

Come join St. Mark's on Wednesday nights at 6:45 pm during Easter season for meditation and replenishment. All are welcome! Coffee, tea & cookies fellowship follow in Heritage Hall.



St. Mark's Journeys in Faith

continue throughout the Easter Season on Wednesday nights at 7:30 pm in Heritage Hall. All are welcome to grow in their faith and explore the St. Mark's community. For info contact catechumenate@stmarks-sf.org.



The 40 Days of Lent

A preparation for Holy Baptism

Traditionally, the 40 days of Lent were reserved in the ancient church for inquirers of the Christian faith interested in baptism and so-called catechumens. The height of this Lenten journey is the reception into the community of Christ by holy baptism at the Easter Vigil service.

If you desire to be baptized into the Christian faith or know someone who is interested, please contact or Pastor Christian Jennert at Jennert@stmarks-sf.org for further information. We will gladly walk with you on this journey of baptism.

Upcoming Organ Recitals at St. Mark's

Sunday, April 6 at 2:00 pm

Ron McKean

Sunday, April 27 at 2:00 pm

Emanuele Battisti

Saturday, May 17 at 7:30 pm

James David Christie (free event)

Sunday, June 1 at 2:00 pm

Adult Forums

Members and friends of St. Mark's meet Sunday mornings at 10:00 in the Fireside Room in the Urban Life Center. We welcome all to join in learning and exploring together. Our forums for the coming Sundays are:

Lenten Book Study

Passion for Pilgrimage

by Alan Jones

March 2, 9, 16

Pastors Ekdale and Jennert continue leading the study of "Passion for Pilgrimage—Notes for the Journey Home, Meditations on the Easter Mystery during Lent." Rev. Jones is serving as the Dean of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco.

EASTER - March 23

No Adult Forum

Millennium Development Goals

March 30 and April 6

In September 2000, every nation of the world, including the United States, pledged themselves to work together to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which would end extreme poverty by 2015. Is it possible? Come learn about the Goals and see how we are doing.

Topic to be announced

April 13

Safe Congregation

April 20

St. Mark's Lutheran is committed to being a safe supportive congregation, free of abuse, and harassment. Come learn about St. Mark's policies and procedures to prevent abuse, intervene appropriately, and care for all involved.

St. Mark's "Berlin Connection"

April 27

Tom Benson presents the historical ties between St. Mark's and the American Church in Berlin, Germany. Our esteemed late Pastor Walter Bock presided at the Berlin church in the early 1960s. Come hear the fascinating story of this ex-patriot congregation, and learn about its new 21st century missions in a rapidly changing Europe.

Safe Congregation

Training

Sat., March 8th from 9-10:30am

Sat., March 15th from 2-3:30pm

Sun., April 6th from 12:15 to 2pm

St. Mark's is committed to being a safe place for members and visitors, children and adults. "Safe Congregation Training" is required for all staff and volunteers who work with children at St. Mark's. Parents and other

interested parishioners are encouraged to attend. The training will be offered in the Conference Room of the Urban Life Center. Choose a date and RSVP to Mary Ritter at mlrped@aol.com or 510-895-0336. You can see the "Safe Congregation Policy" on the St. Mark's website - click on Resources, then Forms and Downloads.

Thanks for learning and reflecting on our duty to provide a safe place for members and visitors of St. Mark's!

SMART April Fools

Tuesday, April 1, 2008

This SMART event will be planned by Allana Helland, a new member at St. Mark's and an event planner by profession. Watch for the weekly announcement and your invites to sign up for a fun event on April Fools Day (...and this is not a joke ;-)



Confirmation students try their hand at the wire course, one of many games and activities that take place each summer at Mt. Cross.

Senior Activities

There will be no senior activities during March due to Lent.

Senior Center Luncheon on Wednesday, April 16th at noon

Dean Atkinson will create another gourmet meal....menu specifics will be posted at MLT and in the church bulletin as the time approaches.

Pt. Pinole Regional Shoreline with Coffee Klatsch on Pr. Christian's Deck Wednesday April 23 starting at 10:30 am



The journey is as scenic as the destination at Point Pinole Regional

Shoreline, a 2,315-acre parkland. Trails lead through breezy meadows with wildflowers in season, through aromatic eucalyptus woods, or along bluffs and beaches on San Pablo Bay. Please bring a brown bag lunch that we will eat in the picnic area of Pt. Pinole Park. Coffee, tea and cake will be served at Pr Christian's.

Attention: Due to the nature of this trip, all participants need to have good mobility as some walking will be involved. The number of participants is limited to 6.

All trips are offered on a first-come, first-served basis. The number of participants varies depending on drivers' availability. If there are too few participants 24 hours prior to the outing, the trip may be cancelled. Please be at Martin Luther Tower 10 minutes before departure.

Summer Camp 2008 for youth, children and families

Mt. Cross is a Christian outdoor ministry camp owned and operated by the Lutheran Congregations of Northern California and Nevada. Mt. Cross is located in a beautiful spot in the Redwood forest of the Santa Cruz Mountains where campers can breathe fresh air and listen to God's calling. There is safe, lively, fun camp activities along with bible study, singing, campfires, hikes, swimming, and more! Check out their website for their summer schedule and registration -

www.mtcross.org.

Pastors Elizabeth, Christian and our confirmation students will be attending a week of Confirmation Camp in July.



Nonviolent Living for Lutherans training in April

A Day-Long Interactive Training in Nonviolence for ELCA Lutherans in the Bay Area

Saturday, April 12th
8:30 am – 5:00 pm

The Nonviolent Living for Lutherans training will be hosted by Pace e Bene, a non-profit organization based out of Oakland whose mission is to foster a just and peaceful world through non-violent education, community-building, and action. The purpose of this training is to educate Bay Area Lutherans in nonviolent living and action, especially as it is drawn out of Lutheran theology and tradition. The cost of the program cost is \$50 per person. For more information, contact John Cummings at johncummings@paceebene.org or call 510.268.8765.



The Rt. Rev. Marc Andrus, Episcopal Bishop of California And The Rev. David G. Mullen, Lutheran Bishop of the Sierra Pacific Synod co-celebrate Candlemas at St. Mark's in February.

A Great RIC Story

The following is a letter received by Pastor Ekdale in January from former St. Mark's members Jeff and Jill Gruber.

Hello Pastor Steve and Pastor Elizabeth,

I have the privilege of sharing some good news with both of you. And, the good news is in no small part due to our wonderful experiences with you, your congregations and the social ministry activities of your churches.

When we moved back to the Midwest to be closer to our families in 2004, we looked at the RIC directory and were very disappointed to find out there was only one RIC church in the region, and it was an hour's drive away. So, we visited many churches looking for one we were excited about joining. After about a year of looking, we found a congregation to join, primarily because of it having a decent number of youth and youth programs. I don't want to say we "settled", but we did miss the vibrancy we experienced at St. Mark's and Peace.

In early spring of 2007, we received a letter inviting us to participate in adult education classes on human sexuality in order to provide input to the ELCA on the issue. Jill and I discussed attending, but with time being tight, we felt that trying to establish policy for the ELCA as a whole was probably a bit beyond anything we could have a meaningful impact on. In other words, the education would be good, but as far as impacting ELCA pol-

icy, we thought we'd be wasting our time. So Jill put together a letter to our Pastor indicating we'd be more interested in working on the issue on a congregational level. She then shared our positive experiences with RIC churches and how they, more than any others we'd been members of, truly embodied our understanding of Christ's spirit of loving one another and being non-judgmental.

Well, to our absolute surprise, Pastor responded very positively about wanting to learn more about RIC and asked if we might be willing to share our experiences with the adult education group that had just been through the human sexuality education.

Jill and I met with the adult education class a few times and the decision was made by Pastor, and supported by church council, to explore becoming an RIC congregation. I became part of the RIC committee along with six others. We visited the only other RIC church in the region and met with about 20 of their members. Members of the our congregation's RIC exploration committee were very surprised to learn what a blessing it was for gay, lesbian and trans-gender individuals to have a church come out and say they were welcome. Most folks just kind of have a blind spot here. We also coordinated a number of temple talks through the summer and fall. We also provided educational materials to the congregation including the Walter Wink pamphlet and conducted adult education on the Old Testament verses concerning homosexuality and different ways to interpret the

information.

We were going to vote on the issue at a congregational meeting in October, but then all of those opposed to the issue (hiding in the shadows until this time), made quite a commotion about this being "rammed down their throat", "being conducted in secret", "RIC & LCNA being radical organizations outside the mainstream ELCA", etc. Of course, only one or two of these folks had attended any of the RIC committee meetings, educational sessions, etc. So, it was back to more education and inclusiveness for the next several months. We sent out a survey to the congregation asking where we needed to focus our energies. We learned that the majority had no problem with the Affirmation of Welcome Statement we'd developed that included reference to lesbians and gays. RIC seemed to be the issue.

It was decided to proceed with the vote on our Affirmation of Welcome Statement at the annual congregational meeting on January 27. After the vote, we would open discussions on the RIC issue but not bring it up for a vote. This Sunday, the Affirmation of Welcome Statement passed by a vote (secret ballot) of 59 in favor to 4 opposed !!Jill and I were thrilled. Pastor was thrilled as it was strong enough to indicate this was not an issue that was going to split the congregation, but more likely, make us a stronger more vibrant and inclusive congregation.

This is the Affirmation of Welcome adopted by the church:

Affirmation of Welcome

In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, who invited us in reconciling love and grace to join in the reign of God, this church welcomes all. We extend this welcome to all believers and non-believers regardless of their age, cultural background, economic status, ethnic or linguistic heritage, employment status, housing status, substance dependence, marital status, physical or mental abilities, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other distinction. As we are all one in God's eyes, we encourage any who express an interest to become an active part of the full life of this congregation as we witness to the love of God. This is our response to the Gospel, as we understand it, and to do any less would deny to others the welcome we ourselves have received from the Creator of us all.

The discussion of RIC status after the vote on the welcome statement was also encouraging. Most did not see a problem with being listed. This cut across all age groups.

Thank you for all you have done to help motivate us to do our small part to address widespread church sponsored discrimination of gays, lesbians and trans-genders in our society. We have a long way to go in our new "home", but let me tell you, the 59 to 4 vote this Sunday sure feels like we've made some progress in the right direction. I am really proud of the congregation coming so far on this issue in a relatively short time.

Warm regards,
Jeff and Jill

Sacred Acts at St. Mark's

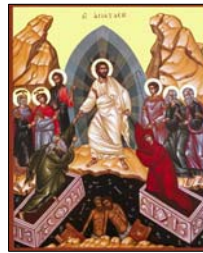
Join us in commemorating the recent sacred event in our parish:

The baptism of Reuben Jones on Sunday, January 13.

St. Mark's Spring**Men's Retreat**

'Living the Easter Hope'

Saturday, April 12, 9:30 am -2:30 pm at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley



Join men of St. Mark's for a day of conversation, reflection, and prayer on Saturday, April 12, from 9:30 am -3:00 pm on the beautiful campus of the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley. Easter Hope is the theme of the retreat. We will use the resurrection story and other activities to reflect on our individual faith journeys and explore the ways in which God is calling us to move and grow.

Our retreat master will be Sarah Cozzi, MCM. Come, read and ponder scripture with other men from St. Mark's as we discern the presence of God in our personal faith journeys.

Please bring your Bible, comfortable clothes and some snacks to share. The cost is \$40.00 per person (including breakfast). Limited scholarships are available. For more info or to sign up, please contact Pr Christian Jennert at 415.928-7770 x.226 or jennert@stmarks-sf.org.

Stewardship**Financial Summary**

	Jan 08	YTD
Income	38,303	316,243
Expenses	41,504	331,386
Net	(3,201)	(15,143)

Forward in Faith Update

Pledged to FIF:	765,424
Received:	551,897
Shortage:	213,525

Thank you for your continued support!

Church Office Closed

The Church Office will be closed at noon on Good Friday, March 21, and all day on Monday, March 24.

Church Council Highlights

Highlights from the January Church Council meeting:

- Reviewed and approved the 2008 budget for presentation to the congregation at the annual meeting
- Approved the distribution of Lenten Box funds to the Soyapango congregation and the San Francisco Night Ministry; provided guidance to Social Ministry regarding Special Giving Sundays
- Approved the new position of a St. Mark's Facilities Coordinator
- Approved title change for Jun Ranches to "Director of Church Administration and Operations"

**Sierra Pacific Synod
Assembly in Oakland
April 25-27**

Visitors are welcome! Visit the website at www.spselca.org for complete information.

The Evangel

Green Idea: If you would prefer to receive your Evangel via email, please send that request to dayton@stmarks-sf.org.

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

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March - April 2008

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Church Office Hours
9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday-Friday
Phone: 415.928.7770
Fax: 415.928.8534
www.stmarks-sf.org

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 ELCIC (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 growing Christian community rooted in tradition and open to new expressions. Responding to God's compassionate love, we reach out in service to the community and the world. With openness of heart and spirit we welcome all.

Staff

The Rev. Elizabeth E. Ekdale, Lead Pastor
The Rev. Christian Jennert, Associate Pastor
Jun Ranches, Director of Church Admin. and Ops.
Ann Dayton, Administrative Assistant
Tina Haner, Facilities Coordinator
Cheryl Garcia, Bookkeeper
Duc Huynh, Buildings and Grounds Supervisor
Carl Storey, Weekend Custodian
Elvira Markov and Gladys Pozo, Nursery Assistants
Jenny Hart, Sunday School Coordinator
Jeremy Fuerst, Teaching Parish Student

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

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson, Presiding Bishop
The Rev. David Mullen, Bishop, Sierra Pacific Synod
The Rev. Daniel Solberg, Dean, San Francisco Conference



Sister Parish

Cordero de Dios (Lamb of God) Lutheran Church in Soyapango, El Salvador

